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Woman in the Golden Ages

Woman in the Golden Ages

By

Amelia Gere Mason

New York
The Century Co.
1901

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Published October, 1901.

THE DEVINNE PRESS.

TO THE
REPRESENTATIVE WOMEN
OF TO-DAY

PREFACE

IN this series of detached essays I have tried to gather and group the most salient and essential facts relating to the character, position, and intellectual attainments of women in the great ages of the world. It is not an easy matter to trace with any exactness the lives of women of classic times, as they were largely ignored by men who chronicled events. If the historians gave them any place at all, it was an insignificant one, concerning only their relations to men, and they were more inclined to sing the praises of those who ministered to masculine caprices than of those distinguished for any merit whatever. There were exceptions in the cases of a few women of very remarkable gifts; but even these were subject to the worst aspersions, for the simple reason that they had the courage of their talents and convictions. This

fashion of considering women only as convenient appendages of men may account largely for the space given to those of more beauty and sensuous charm than decorum—a fact which has doubtless misled after-ages. It accounts also for the reckless flings of satirists and comedians, who were even less to be trusted in early times than they are to-day. Truth compels me to recall more or less the contemptuous attitude of men, as it was too large a factor in determining the position of women to be omitted. But in no case has it been exaggerated, or set down in a spirit of antagonism.

The most striking points in the lives of world-famous women are sufficiently familiar. True or false, they are often quoted in proof of one theory or another. But a few isolated facts gathered at random count for little. It is only in the grouping of many facts of many ages that the real quality of the old types of womanhood can be clearly discerned. One is constantly confronted, however, with discrepancies in the records. This may be readily understood when we consider the impossibility of getting a correct version of things that happen next door to us. Reports of events and estimates of character are about as various as the people who

offer them. One can only accept those which have the most inherent probability, or are given by the chronicler who has the best reputation for veracity. So far as possible, I have relied upon contemporary writers for the facts of their own age; but I am also indebted largely to the research of the great modern historians. In the few classic or Italian translations, I have usually availed myself of those nearest at hand, if they had the stamp of authority, though they might not always be the latest, perhaps not even the best.

These essays are limited mainly to the golden ages of Greece, Rome, and the Renaissance, with a brief interlude that serves as a transition from pagan to medieval times. The mantle of the great Italians fell upon the women of the golden age of France, who reached the summit of the power and influence of their sex in the past. The personality and intellectual influence of these women I have considered at length in "The Women of the French Salons."

The inevitable "woman question" is not touched except as it may appear in the effort to show, in a small degree, the intellectual quality and influence of some of the representative women of the past, and to vindicate them from charges which are often

as untrue as unjust. Without any pretension to profound learning or philosophic criticism, I have simply presented the most significant facts available, with their various settings, and a few plain conclusions which may be insufficient, but which are at least sincere and carefully considered. In estimates of people I have taken the most charitable view possible without sacrificing truth to imagination. It is the safer side in which to err, as the world has always been much more active in the spread of calumny than of praise, especially where women are concerned.

There is no pretense to historical continuity, or to a serious study of present conditions, in the single modern essay. It simply considers one phase of our own age, which we doubtless claim to be altogether golden.

The work has been a labor of love. If I have succeeded in throwing any fresh light upon the women of long ago, many of whom are already half mythical, or in giving a clear impression of what we owe them, my long and pleasant hours among old chronicles and forgotten records will not have been in vain.

August, 1901. AMELIA GERE MASON.

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INTRODUCTION

IT has been quite gravely asserted of late that "woman has just discovered her intellect." As a result of this we are told with great earnestness that the nineteenth century belonged to her by virtue of conquest, and that she is entering upon a new era of power and intelligence which is to usher in the millennium.

On the other hand, we are assured with equal persistency that the divine order of things is being upset: that women are spoiled by over-education; that the time-honored privileges of men are ruthlessly invaded and their mental vigor endangered; that morals are suffering; that all the good old ideals are in process of destruction; and that we have the dismal prospect of being ruled, to our sorrow, by a race of Minervas who neglect their families, if they have any, and insist upon running things in their own way, to the ruin of social order—all of which has been said periodically since the beginning of the world.

INTRODUCTION

With these serious questions I do not attempt to deal any further than to picture, to the best of my ability in a limited space, the position of women in the great ages of the past, and the personality, aspirations, and achievements of a few of their most famous representatives, so far as this is possible after the lapse of centuries. From a multiplicity of facts which point their own moral, each one of us may draw his or her special lessons.

It is quite true that the woman of to-day is putting her intellect to new uses; possibly she has become more vividly conscious of it. We know also that the average intelligence of all classes of women, as well as of men, was never so high as now. But the intrinsic force of the human intellect is not measured by averages. A thousand satellites do not make a sun, though they may shine for ages by the light of one. Then, whatever our achievements may be—and I do not underrate them—it would reflect rather seriously on the feminine mind to suppose that it could lie practically dormant all these centuries, even under the heavy disabilities which were imposed upon it. The fact that women have always been in subjection and on the whole very much oppressed and trampled upon, especially in the early ages, makes it all the more remarkable that they have left so many striking examples, not only of the highest wisdom and intelligence, but of the highest executive power, ever since Deborah

sat as a judge in Israel, Miriam sang immortal songs of heroic deeds, and Semiramis conquered Asia.

No doubt our own deserts are great, and we do well to burn a fair amount of incense to them; but possibly the smoke of it is so dense that we fail to see all the fine things that have been done before us. Other women have been as clever as we are, and as strong, if not individually stronger; many have been as good, a few perhaps have been more wicked than most of us; and the majority have had a great deal more to complain of. "There is nothing new under the sun" was written so long ago that it seems as if there could have been nothing old. Even the "new woman" has her prototypes in the past, who have thought, written, lectured, ruled, asserted themselves, and been honored as well as talked about in their day. Men have prophesied strange revolutions in human affairs because of them, and sometimes have sent them back to the chimney-corner and silence, as one of our own chivalrous writers says they will do again if this irrepressible being who presumes to have opinions makes things too uncomfortable for them. But the world has gone on marrying and giving in marriage, and growing in the main, let us hope, happier and better, while the social condition of women has steadily improved, with an occasional reaction, in spite of the fears of the timid and the sneers of the cynical.

INTRODUCTION

It may be safely said that there was not much in the lives of the women of two or three thousand years ago which we should care to repeat. Their field was, as a rule, narrow and restricted, their privileges were few, their burdens and sorrows were many. To go outside the sphere prescribed for them called for great talent and great courage, since respectability was usually regarded as synonymous with insignificance. But even in this aspiring, much-knowing, self-gratulatory, woman-honoring twentieth century, whenever we are told that the feminine intellect is inherently weak and has never created anything worthy of immortality, we point with pride to Sappho, the one woman poet of the world whose claim to the first rank has never been disputed. If we wish to illustrate the social and political influence of woman, we cite Aspasia, the trusted confidante and adviser of the greatest statesmen and philosophers, as well as the presiding genius of the first salon of which we have any knowledge. Yet these women lived in the dawn of the present order of things. We may recall the scholarly mind and masterly executive qualities of Zenobia, which perhaps have never been exceeded; the profound learning and brilliant oratory of Hypatia, who was torn in pieces because of them by the fanatical Alexandrian mob; Cornelia, gifted and austere, adding the courage of a Stoic to the tenderness of a mother; Livia, wise, tactful, and

far-seeing; Marcella, saint and *grande dame*, a savante, a leader, and a heroine. Other figures of the classic ages, grave and thoughtful, clever and brilliant, or mystical and sweet, pass in stately array before us, each supreme in her own field. It may have been an intellectual gift that she had; it may have been a masterful character, or a heroic virtue, or a spirit of sublime self-sacrifice, or a faith so exalted that it has illuminated all the centuries. Each of these traits has its illustrious examples among the women of long ago.

Passing ages of darkness, in which here and there the talent of a Countess Matilda or an Héloïse shone brightly through the mists of ignorance and superstition, we find the women of a new era delving side by side with men in the mines of classic lore, and bringing to their work the same enthusiasm, the same untiring patience. We find them, too, versed in all the learning of their time. If we are disposed to plume ourselves overmuch on our intellectual glories, it may serve as a lesson in humility to recall the wonderful women of the Renaissance, who filled chairs of philosophy and law in the universities, sustained public theses, spoke in Latin before learned societies, wrote pure Greek and studied Hebrew, preached in cathedrals were sent on special embassies and consulted on grave affairs of State by popes and kings. With all our latter-day prestige and the chivalry of mod-

ern men, it would be difficult to imagine Leo XIII or the German Emperor consulting a woman on serious questions of policy, or even listening to one unless she were a queen with power that must be reckoned with. If they did, it would be behind closed doors where no one could know it. Yet we have wise women and able ones.

When men lost themselves in metaphysical abstractions it was the "new woman" of the Renaissance who lent wings to their minds and stimulated creation. A touch from her uncaged intellect thrilled the learning of the age and put into it a soul. A Vittoria Colonna inspires a Michelangelo, writes an immortal *in memoriam*, and brings poetry to the service of religion. An Olympia Morata pauses in her high intellectual flight to give an object-lesson in moral courage and the virtues of a gentle womanhood. A Catherine of Siena thinks as well as loves, writes as well as prays; the head of Christendom is moved by her wise counsels, and the currents of the world are changed.

It was woman, too, who married thought to life, presided at the birth of society, and diffused the seeds of the new knowledge. She took philosophy out of the obscurity of ponderous tomes, and made men reduce it to clear terms with the logical processes left out, so that the unlettered might read. If men held the palm of supremacy in rea-

son and abstract thought, women illuminated them by sentiment and imagination, so touching the world to living issues. The swift, facile, intuitive intellects of women complemented the slower and more logical minds of men, and it is this union that creates life in all its larger, more enduring forms. It was the social gifts of women added to a flexible intelligence that raised conversation to a fine art. A Duchess Leonora, an Isabella d'Este, a Duchess Elisabetta, call about them the wit, learning, talent, and genius of an age, and in this atmosphere poets, artists, and men of letters find an audience and an inspiration. Each gives of his best, which is fostered and turned into new channels. Standards are raised by the association of various forms of excellence, and society reaches a higher altitude of living and thinking. To be sure, the day comes when it matters more to talk and be talked about than it does to know. The rank weeds of mediocrity spring up in profusion and overshadow the flowers. The ideals droop and the brilliant age ends. But it has fulfilled its mission, and all ages end, great and small, luminous and dark alike.

Did men degenerate in the intellectual companionship of women? To what glorious heights did they attain in the dark ages, when no woman's voice was heard, except in prayer? What heights have they reached in any period that did not find its ideals in brute force, when, at least, a few women

of light and leading did not stand at their side, though only by courtesy, instead of sitting at their feet?

Did women lose in morals when they gained in intelligence, as men so often delight to tell us? Quite the reverse, if I have read history aright. In seasons of moral decadence it is the women of serious education who have been among the first to lift their voices against the sins of the period in which they lived. If they were often swept along by the current which they had no power to stem, it was because of their helplessness, not of their knowledge. They were not faultless but human, and subject at all periods to the same conditions that were fatal to men, who claimed supremacy in strength. If they have sometimes broken on the rocks of superstition, it was because they had too little intelligence, not too much.

Have they lost the tender instincts of wifehood and motherhood? The records of the world are full of the unselfish devotion of great wives and great mothers, and the men who shine most conspicuously on the pages of history, from Cæsar and the Gracchi to George Washington and Daniel Webster, have been the sons of able and intelligent women. A cultivated intellect is not a guaranty of virtue, but it has never yet made a woman forget her love and allegiance to a strong and noble man, or turn a cold ear to the artless prattle of a child, though vanity and weakness and folly have done so very often. But it has many a time given her the

power and the impulse to rear a world-famed monument to the one, and to give the best work and thought of a self-sacrificing life for the glory of the other. It is not simply heredity, but the atmosphere and companionship of the first years, that make or mar a destiny. But let us not confound intelligent women with pedants and pretenders, or great women with small ones on a pedestal of any sort, self-erected or other.

All this I trust will be made clear by illustration in these pages, together with the fact that the intellects of at least a few women have been very much awake in all the golden ages of the world, and exercised on many of the same problems that confront them to-day. The question of equality has been discussed in every period. It is needless to pursue these discussions here any further than to recall them. It does not signify whether women have or have not done this, that, or the other thing as well as men—whether they have or have not been conspicuous for creative genius, or scientific genius, or any other special form of genius. It is as idle to ask whether they are, on the whole, equal or inferior to men, as to ask whether an artist is equal to a general, an inventor to a philosopher, or a poet to a man of science. There are certain things that will always be done better by men; there are other things of equal value to the happiness and well-being of the race, and worthy of equal honor, that will always be done better by women; there

are still other and many things that may be done equally well by either. The final proof of ability lies in its tangible result, and it is a waste of words to speculate on unknown quantities, or to say that under certain conditions women might have attained specific heights which they have not attained. No doubt it is true, but one cannot deal with shadows. We have to consider things as they are, with the possibilities toward which they point.

But the past we have, with its achievements and its lessons. We find that women, with all their restrictions and in spite of denunciations from men which seem incredible, have long ago touched their highest mark in poetry, in wisdom, in administration, in learning, and in social power. In the great ages of the flowering of the human intellect, a rare few have always stood on the heights, beacon-stars which sent out their rays to distant centuries. As the world has advanced they have increased in number more than in altitude; but barriers have been removed, one after another, until they have practically ceased to exist. It is worth while, however, to bear in mind that four hundred years ago a woman, with many disabilities, had ample facilities for reaching her full intellectual stature with honor and without hindrance. Why did her sex lose these privileges so liberally accorded to men, in the "land of the free" and the early nineteenth century?

We too have our stars—our women who think,

our women who know, our women who do; we too have our special distinctions—our triumphs in new fields in which we have had no rivals. But I have touched only a single phase of modern life. There are too many fresh and difficult problems to be disposed of in an essay. Then we can hardly hear the message of the age for the din of the voices. It is true enough that the old ideals are disappearing. What we do not know yet is whether, apart from the intelligence which gives all life a fresh impulse and meaning, the new ones forced upon us by the march of events are better. It suffices here to say that what really signifies to the woman of to-day is to expand in her own natural proportions, to maintain her own individuality without the loss of her essential charm, to temper strength of soul with tenderness, to strive for achievement instead of the passing honors of the hour, to preserve the fine and dignified quality of an enlarged and perfected womanhood. It is not as the poor copy of a man that she will ever come into her rightful kingdom. Duty or necessity may lead one into strange and hard paths, but the crown of glory is not for those who fling away their birthright to join in the strident chorus of the eager crowd that kneels before the glittering altars of the money-gods, or to follow the procession that throngs the dusty highways and, lifting its eyes no more to the mountain-tops, sings its own apotheosis in the market-place.

WOMAN IN GREEK POETRY

WOMAN IN GREEK POETRY

• Denunciation of Woman in Early Poets •
• Kindlier Attitude of Homer •
• Penelope • Nausicaä • Andromache • Helen •
• Contemptuous Attitude of the Dramatists •
• Their Fine Types •
• Iphigenia • Alcestis • Antigone •
• Consideration for Women in the Heroic Age •

WOMAN IN GREEK POETRY

I

"THE badness of man is better than the goodness of woman," says a Jewish proverb. And worse still, "A man of straw is better than a woman of gold." As men made the proverbs, these may be commended for modesty as well as chivalry. The climax is reached in this amiable sentiment: "A dead wife is the best goods in a man's house." Under such teaching it is not at all surprising that the Jews began their morning invocations, two thousand years ago, with these significant words: "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who hast not made me a heathen, who hast not made me a slave, who hast not made me a woman."

These are very good samples of the manner in which women were talked of in ancient days. In

Egypt, however, they fared rather better. We are even told that men pledged obedience to their wives, in which case they doubtless spoke of them more respectfully. At all events, they had great political influence, were honored as priestess or prophetess, and had the privilege of owning themselves and their belongings. But a state of affairs in which

> Men indoors sit weaving at the loom,
> And wives outdoors must earn their daily bread,

has its unpleasant side. How it was regarded by women does not appear, but if they found a paradise they were speedily driven out of it. Evidently men did not find the exchange of occupations agreeable. Two or three centuries before our era, a Greek ruler came to the throne, who had other views, and every woman awoke one morning to the fact that her day was ended, her power was gone, and that she owned nothing at all. Everything that she had, from her house and her land to her feathers and her jewels, was practically confiscated, so that she could no longer dispose of it. These women had rights, and lost them. Why they were taken away we do not know. Possibly too much was claimed. But all this goes to prove that "chivalrous man" cannot be trusted so long as he holds not simply the balance of power, but the whole of it.

Apart from this little episode, the early world never drifted far from the traditions of the Garden

of Eden, where Adam naturally reserved the supremacy for himself, and sent obedient Eve about her housewifely duties among the roses and myrtles. If these were soon turned into thorns and thistles, it was only her proper punishment for bringing into the world its burden of human ills.

The changes were rung on this theme in all races and languages. The esthetic Greeks surpassed the Jews in their denunciations, and exhausted their wit in cynical phrases that lacked even the dignity of criticism. No writers have abused women more persistently. It is an evidence of great moral vitality that, in the face of such undisguised contempt, they were able to maintain any prestige at all. If we may credit the poets who gave the realistic side of things, there was neither honor nor joy in the life of the average woman who dwelt in the shadow of Helicon. It was bare and cheerless, without even the sympathy that tempers the hardest fate. This pastoral existence, which seems so serene, had its serpent, and that serpent was a woman. A wife was a necessary evil. If a man did not marry, he was doomed to a desolate age; if he did, his happiness was sure to be ruined. Out of ten types of women described by the elder Simonides, only one was fit for a wife, and this was because she had the nature of a bee and was likely to add to her husband's fortune. As the proportion was so small, the risk may be imagined. Her side of the ques-

tion was never taken into account at all. The comfort of so insignificant a being was really not worth considering. "A man has but two pleasant days with his wife," says the satirist; "one when he marries her, the other when he buries her."

Hesiod mentions, among the troubles of having a wife, that she insists upon sitting at table with her husband. Later, when the Greeks found their pleasure in fields of the intellect which were closed to women, even this poor privilege was usually denied her, and always when other men were present. Hesiod was evidently a disappointed man, and took dark views of things, women in particular, but he only followed the fashion of his time in making them responsible for the troubles and sorrows of men. It was the old, old story: "The woman gave me, and I did eat." She was the Pandora who had let loose upon the world all the ills, and kept in her box the hope that might have made them tolerable. If she found her position an unpleasant one, she had the consolation of being told that she was one of the evils sent into the world by the gods, to punish men for the sin of Prometheus. The other was disease.

This is a sorry picture, but it reflects the usual Greek attitude toward women, and cannot be ignored, much as we should like to honor the sense of justice, and the heart as well as the intellect of men of so brilliant a race.

WOMAN IN GREEK POETRY

II

THERE is another side, however, upon which it is more pleasing to dwell. By some curious paradox, the Hellenic poets, who delighted in saying such disagreeable things, have given us many of the finest types of womanhood, though these women lived only in the imagination of great men, or so near the border-land of shadows as to be half mythical. It may be said to the credit of Homer that he never joined in the popular chorus of abuse. His women are not permitted to forget their subjection, but the high-born ones at least are treated with gentle courtesy, and he indulges in no superfluous flings at their inferiority or general worthlessness. Many of them hold places of honor and power. These women of a primitive age, who stand at the portals of the young world luminous and smiling, or draped in the stately dignity of antique goddesses, still retain the distinction of classic ideals. They look out from the misty dawn of things with veiled faces, but we know that love shone from their soft eyes, and words of wisdom fell from their rosy lips.

> The vulgar of my sex I most exceed
> In real power, when most humane my deed,

says the gentle Penelope, as, tear-dimmed and constant, she weaves and unweaves the many-

colored threads, and waits for her royal lord, who basks in the smiles of Calypso over the sea, and forgets her until he tires of the fascinating siren and begins to long for his home. If there was a trace of artfulness in the innocent device of the faithful wife, it was all the weapon she had to save her honor.

There is no lovelier picture of radiant girlhood than the graceful Nausicaä, as she takes the silken reins in her white hands, and drives across the plains in the first flush of the morning to help her maids "wash their fair garments in the limpid streams." When the snowy robes are laid in the sun to dry, they play a game of ball, this daughter of kings leading all the rest. We hear the echo of her silvery laughter, and see the flash of her shining veil as her light feet fly over the greensward. But the dignity of the princess asserts itself with the forethought and sympathy of the woman in the discreet words with which she greets the destitute stranger, and modestly directs him to her royal mother. Her swift eye notes his air of distinction, his courteous address, and she naïvely wishes in her heart that the gods would send her such a husband. It is to Arête that she bids him go, to the beloved queen who shares the throne of Alcinous with "honors never before given to a woman." Simple is this gentle lady and gracious, whether she sits in her stately palace working rare designs in crimson and purple wools, or gives wise

counsel to her husband, or goes abroad among the people, who adore her as a goddess,

> To heal divisions, to relieve the oppressed,
> In virtue rich, in blessing others, blessed.

A more touching though less radiant figure is Andromache, who shows no trace of weakness as she folds her child to her bosom, after the tender farewell of her brave husband, and goes home, sad and prophetic, to "ply her melancholy loom," and brood over the hopelessness of her coming fate.

These are the great Homeric types, women of simple and noble outlines, untouched by the fires of passion, wise, loyal, efficient, and brave, but rich in sympathy and all sweet affections. The central figures of the fireside, with needle and distaff in hand, they were not without a fine intelligence which, after the fashion of primitive times, found its field in the every-day problems of life. The mysteries of knowledge and speculation had not opened to them.

> There is no fairer thing
> Than when the lord and lady with one soul
> One home possess.

This was the poet's domestic ideal, and the ages have not brought a better one, though they have brought us many things to make it more beautiful.

But what shall we say of Helen, the alluring child of fancy and romance, who stands as an

eternal type of the beauty that led captive the Hellenic world? Even this fair-haired daughter of the gods, who set nations at variance, and did so many things not to be commended, gathers a subtle charm from the domestic setting which the poet's art has given her. She sits serenely in the midst of the woes she has brought, teaching her maidens to work after strange patterns, and weaving her own tragic story in the golden web. It does not occur to her that she is very wicked; indeed, she thinks regretfully that, after all, she is worthy of a braver man. The tears that fall do not dim her brightness. Gray-haired men go to their death under the spell of her divine loveliness, but forget to chide. She is the helpless victim of Aphrodite, who is indulgently charged with all her frailties. Twice ten years have gone since she sailed away from Sparta, but when her forgiving husband takes her home she has lost none of that mystic beauty which is "never stale and never old." She takes her place as naturally as if she had not left it, plays again the pleasant rôle of hostess, and looks with care after the comfort of her guests. When Telemachus goes to see her, and recalls the uncertain fate of the wandering heroes, she gives him the "star-bright" veil her own hands have wrought to help dry the tears she has caused to flow. But she is troubled by no superfluous grief. What the gods send she tranquilly accepts.

When the poets began to analyze, the glamour of this witching goddess was lost, and she became a sinning, soul-destroying woman, a human Circe that lured men to ruin. But the Greeks did not like to see their idols slandered or broken, so in later times they gave her a shadowy existence on the banks of the Nile, where we catch a last glimpse of her, sitting unruffled among the palms, in all the splendor of her radiant beauty, twining wreaths of lotus-flowers for her golden hair, and learning rare secrets of Eastern looms, while men fought and died across the sea for a phantom. It is not upon these fanciful pictures, however, that we like to dwell. The Helen who lives and breathes for us is the Helen of Homer, fair and sweet, more sinned against than sinning, pitying the sorrows she cannot cure, but saved by her matchless charm from the chilling frost of mortal censure.

These women of Homer were mostly wives and daughters of kings. Whether it was because he had been greeted with gentle words and caressing smiles by the fair patricians to whom he recited his verses that he painted them in such glowing colors, or because the women of the heroic age really had the unstudied grace and simple dignity that spring from conscious freedom, we cannot know. But it is certain that the measure of honor and liberty which they enjoyed was a privilege of caste rather than of sex, though it gave them a

virile quality, and added a fresh luster of spontaneity to their domestic virtues.

The lesser women had small consideration. We find the captives, even of royal descent, tossed about among their masters with no regard to their wishes, or rights—if they had any, which seems doubtful. The gentle Briseïs, a high priest's daughter, and as potent a factor in the final disasters of the Greeks as the divine Helen herself, was the merest puppet in the hands of the so-called heroes who quarreled over her, and Chryseïs was only saved from the same fate by the kind interference of Apollo. The bitterest drop in the cup of Hector was the thought of his wife led away weeping by some "mail-clad Achaian," with no one to hear her cries or save her from the hopeless fate of weaving and carrying water at the bidding of another. The women of the people fared little better, if as well. Ulysses had no hesitation in putting to death a dozen of his wife's maids whose conduct did not please him, and he threatened his devoted nurse Euryclea with a like fate, if she revealed the secret of his identity, which she had been the first to divine.

III

IT is difficult to comprehend the attitude of the dramatists of the golden age toward women. They have left many fine and powerful types; they have

created heroines of singular moral grandeur and a superb quality of courage that led them to face death or the bitterest fate as serenely as if they were composing themselves to pleasant dreams; but there was no insult or injustice too great to be heaped upon their sex.

> There is not anything, nor will be ever,
> Than woman worse, let what will fall on man,

says Sophocles. Æschylus, who is, on the whole, the most kindly disposed, makes Eteocles call the Theban maidens a "brood intolerable," "loathed of the wise," and emphasizes his opinion in these flattering lines:

> Ne'er be it mine, in ill estate or good,
> To dwell together with the race of women.

Euripides strikes the bitterest note of all, and sums up his verdict with crushing force:

> Dire is the violence of ocean waves,
> And dire the blast of rivers and hot fires,
> And dire is want and dire are countless things,
> But nothing is so dire and dread as woman.
> No painting could express her dreadfulness,
> No words describe it. If a god made woman
> And fashioned her, he was for men the artist
> Of woes unnumbered, and their deadly foe.

And this in spite of such characters as Alcestis and Iphigenia, who, from a man's point of view,

certainly deserved an apotheosis! It is said that Euripides was unfortunate in his wives, which may account, in part, for his cynical temper. One might suspect that the author of such a diatribe gave ample cause for disaffection, and that he had no more than his deserts. But he seems to have avenged himself, as smaller men have done, by railing at the whole sex. It is easy enough to understand the portrayal of a Phædra or a Medea in dark colors, and one can forgive the mad ravings of despair. But so many needless words of general contempt signify more than a dramatic purpose. To-day they would not be possible in a civilized country. The drama reflects the dominant sentiments of the time, if not always those of the author, and the frequency of such ungracious, not to say virulent, attacks proves the complaisance of a Greek audience and the absence of all consideration for women. Even Aristophanes takes Euripides to task for being a woman-hater, and turns upon him the sharpest points of his satire; but he has himself added the last touch of abuse, which only misses its aim for modern ears by its incredible coarseness. He gives to women all of the lowest vices, without a redeeming virtue. Their presence at the comedy was quite out of the question.

One is tempted to multiply these quotations, as they put in so vivid a light the injustice suffered by women when the expression of such sentiments

was habitual. The saddest feature of it is that men abused them for the ignorance and frivolity which they had themselves practically compelled. The dramatists lived and wrote in an age when men had reached a higher plane of knowledge from which orthodox women were rigidly excluded. The natural consequence of this exclusion was a total lack of companionship, which sent the Attic woman into a species of slavery, while her husband found his society in a class that was better educated and more interesting, but less respectable. This state of things was reflected in Athenian literature, especially in the comedies, and it doubtless led to the general disdain of women so freely expressed in the tragedies. To reconcile such an attitude with the strong character of many of the women portrayed is not easy, unless we take them as object-lessons to their sex in the honor and glory of self-sacrifice.

In the glamour the poets have cast about their great creations, and the marvelous power with which they have made these women live for us, we are apt to lose sight of the fact that the moral force of the best of them is centered in the superhuman immolation of themselves for the benefit of men, to whom it never occurs that any consideration whatever is due to these innocent sufferers. They are subject to men, and ready to lay down their lives, if need be, to make the world comfortable and

pleasant for them; yet they have only sorrow for themselves.

> More than a thousand women is one man
> Worthy to see the light of life,

says the young Iphigenia, as she folds her saffron veil about her, and goes to her doom with words of love and forgiveness, praying for the cruel masters she dies to save. The essence of her training, as of her religion, lies in this meekly uttered sentiment, though the fated child pleads for pity, since "the sorriest life is better than the noblest death." Strong men, among whom are her father and Achilles, the heroes of the ancient world, stand calmly by and let her die. The powerful lover, who will give his life later to avenge the death of his friend, is sorry to lose so sweet a flower for his wife, but he makes no real effort to save her. When she is told that the gods have decreed her sacrifice for the good of her country, the cry of nature is silenced, the touching appeal is stilled. She rises to a divine height of courage, and is the consoler rather than the consoled.

Not less pathetic is the fate of Alcestis, though it is a voluntary one. She robes herself for the tomb as tranquilly as if she were going out on a message of mercy. With sad dignity she crowns with myrtle the altar at which she prays, but not until she takes leave of the familiar room so conse-

crated by love and happiness do the tears begin to fall. This tender wife, who freely gives her life to save her husband, does not falter as she passionately embraces her weeping children, and bids a kind farewell to her pitying servants. The only thing she asks for herself is to see the sun once more, and she tries to inspire this selfish, posing, half-hearted husband with her own fortitude, as her spirit "glides on light wing down the silent paths of sleep." One cannot help wondering if she never had a misgiving that the man who could ask his wife to comfort him for his unspeakable misery in letting her die for him was not worth dying for. But the Greek women had been long trained in the school of passive suffering, and it never seemed to occur to them that it was not quite in the nature of things for the weaker half of the human family to have a monopoly of the sacrifices. It was a part of their destiny; the gods so willed it. Men looked upon it as a comfortable arrangement for themselves, that had good moral results for women. To-day we are inclined to ask why a discipline that is good for women, and tends toward their moral perfection, is not also good for men, who have a like need of being perfected.

But, in spite of rational theories, the world's heart still thrills to a generous emotion so overpowering as to drown all consideration of self, whether or not it is faulty in its mundane wisdom

or its arithmetic. And this it is which casts so lasting a glamour over the women who loom out of the twilight of that far-off time, in noble proportions that dwarf the selfish, arrogant men with whom they are mated. They rise to the dignity of goddesses in their divine pity and courage, while the great Achilles, the masculine ideal of the Greeks, weeps like a child, and sends a generation of men to sleep on the plains of Troy, because he cannot have what he wishes.

Yet it is in the minds of men that these women were conceived, and it is impossible to suppose that they had not at least some faint counterpart in real life, though possibly men, and women as well, are apt to make ideals of what they think ought to be rather than of what is. But why did the Greek poets cast such ridicule and dishonor upon the sex which they have shown capable of such supreme devotion and such exalted virtues?

There is a touch of justice in the bitter scorn with which the blind Œdipus speaks of his sons who

> Keep house at home like maidens in their prime,

while his daughters wear themselves to death for him and for his sorrows.

> No women they, but men in will to toil.

Perhaps Antigone is a trifle too coldly perfect, too faultlessly wise—a tacit reflection upon every-

day human nature, that likes its ease, and counts the cost of its renunciations. We look for a trace of weakness, a warm burst of living tenderness. But duty is shy like love, and chary of expression. "I do not love a friend who loves in words," is the cry of her steadfast soul. There she stands, in the still majesty of a sorrow that lies too deep for tears, supreme among the classic types of the world as a model of filial devotion. Cordelia, true and loyal as she is, and tender at heart, does not approach her in strength and dignity. But the duty of the Greek heroine does not end with her father's death. She lays down her life at last that the false-hearted brother, who has given her no gentle consideration in her days of helplessness and despair, may not lie unburied on the plains of Thebes, and so wander without rest in Hades. She laments the lost pleasures of living. No husband or children are to be hers. Yet no enthusiasm of passion or romance tempers this "cold statue's fine-wrought grace." The man she was to marry is secondary. Love, in our sense, does not enter as a motive power into her life, but her human need of sympathy is shown in a few pathetic words:

> And yet, of all my friends,
> Not one bewails my fate;
> No kindly tear is shed.

There are a few women of colossal wickedness who serve as foils, or shadows in the picture. Their

very sins are a part of the overmastering strength that defies its hard limitations. "Of all things, as many as have life and intellect, we women are the most wretched race; we must first purchase a husband with excess of money, then receive him as our lord," is the bitter protest of the wronged Medea, and the key-note to her tragical destiny. Clytemnestra says that she has always been trained to obey, but she towers far above her warrior husband in force as in crime. She resents his unfaithfulness; she does not forgive him for the inhuman sacrifice of their innocent daughter; she meets him on his own ground. It is appalling, the stern and pitiless passion with which her untamed spirit, spurred on by the white-hot hate which is often a great love reversed, tramples upon every human impulse, and sweeps a whole race with her to destruction. The clash of elemental forces is there, even though the responsibility is shifted upon the gods, who use these frail mortals as blind instruments in their inscrutable plans.

But these monsters of crime are few, and seem to throw into stronger relief the self-forgetful women who exalt their inferior position, and bend their heads to the yoke with such stately dignity that they seem to command even in obeying. For, in spite of the important part assigned them in the world of affairs as well as at the fireside, they are constantly reminded of their little worth. "Let not women

counsel," is the advice of men to the wisest of them.

> Woman, know
> That silence is a woman's noblest part,

says the ill-tempered Ajax to his amiable wife. This gentle Tecmessa wishes to die with him, for "Why should I wish to live if you are dead?" He only tells her to mind her own affairs and be silent. Telemachus orders his faithful mother not to meddle with men's business, but it was precisely because she did meddle with it, and tried, by various simple arts, to bring order into the chaos men had raised, that his royal father had any home to return to, or any kingdom to leave to his ungracious son.

IV

So far as we can gather from Homer, women of the better sort had a degree of consideration in the heroic age which they lost at a later period. When men fought or tilled the soil, it was in the natural order of things that they should stay at home to look after their children and households. The division of duties was fair enough. In a reign of brute force they needed protection, and though it was pretty well settled that men were born to rule and women to be ruled, there was evidently a great

deal of pleasant companionship in family life. Compared with the seclusion of the Oriental harem, the position of these women was one of freedom, and it lasted to historic times. Their supreme distinction was a moral one. Books they had not. Of literature nothing was known beyond the verses and tales of wandering minstrels. Art was little more than a handicraft. If men worked in marble or in metal, women designed patterns for weaving and embroidery. Men had not begun to put their thoughts or speculations into enduring form, and women were not excluded from a large part of their lives. But so perfectly did many of them realize the world's ideal of feminine virtues that we ask no more. They stand upon pedestals, like the masterpieces of Greek sculpture, noble in their simplicity and lovely in the repose of their surpassing strength.

But the dramatists reflected in a thousand ways the altered spirit of an age in which good women had no visible part. Their immortal heroines are equally strong and instinct with vitality, though less simple and of severer mold, but they are revered from afar as the goddesses were, while real women are a target for abuse and ridicule. It is to no rare and perishable beauty, no fleeting grace, no intellectual brilliancy, that they owe their eternal charm, but to their moral greatness, their strength of sacrifice. These exalted ideals, so bravely tender, so patiently enduring, were the victims of adverse des-

tiny or of their own devotion. But the world held for them no reward in the masculine heart. There were many women in classic story who died for men, but only one for whom men were willing to die, and this was Helen, whose divine beauty appealed to the senses and the imagination. She was made to be loved, to command; all others were made to serve. The Greeks adored beauty; they lived in it, they created it. Here lay their pride; here more than once they found their Nemesis. But virtue they gave a place apart, as they did the wise Athena, who towered in golden isolation over the Attic divinities. It had no share in the joy of existence.

Beneath the glad pæans of heroes we hear at intervals, across the ages, the clear voices of women chanting a miserere in an undertone of sorrow or despair. Doubtless the poets saw and felt the tragical side of their lives, but tradition had the inevitability of fate, as it has had in other times. They have given us great and lonely ideals of womanhood, but a somber picture of the place held by living women in the Athenian world.

SAPPHO AND THE FIRST WOMAN'S CLUB

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• Golden Age of Lyric Poetry •
• The Mythical and the Real Sappho •
• Her Poems •
• Contrast with Hebrew Singers •
• Poet of Nature and Passion •
• The First Woman's Club •
• Æolian and Doric Poetesses •
• Honors to the Genius of Hellenic Women •

SAPPHO AND THE FIRST WOMAN'S CLUB

I

A WOMAN and a poet; adored by men and loved by her own sex; artist, singer, teacher, leader; an exile and an immortal—all this was the Sappho who stood upon the heights twenty-five centuries ago and sang the verses that thrilled the heart of the world. She lived in the brilliant period when lyric poetry reached its zenith and was its finest representative. Before her no woman had appeared in a distinctly literary rôle, so far as we know. To-day she still stands supreme in her own field.

This "violet-crowned, pure, sweetly smiling Sappho," who sang so divinely, and vanished so theatrically from Leucadia's "rock of woe," was long veiled in the mists of romance. The tragical

muse pictured in flowing draperies, with a crown of laurel on her head and a lyre in her hand, chanting her swan-song before cooling her heart of flame in the blue sea at her feet, was as intangible to us as one of Fra Angelico's angels. She looked out of a land of mystery and shadows, with nothing human about her save that she loved, and suffered, and died. "Do thou, gentle Love, place wings beneath me as I fall, that I may not be the reproach of the Leucadian waves," is her pathetic prayer, and here she fades from our sight.

But it has been fairly settled that this romantic story was a dream; that Phaon was only a mythical Adonis; that Sappho did not follow him across the sea, did not die of love, and never took the fatal leap at all. The sentimental tourist who sighs over her melancholy fate to-day, as he passes the bare white cliffs of Santa Maura, so long consecrated to tragedies of love and sorrow, pays his sympathetic tribute to a phantom. She went to Sicily, it seems, but not for love. It is supposed that she was exiled. There were political conspiracies for which men were banished, and she may have written revolutionary songs. Possibly she held too radical opinions on the privileges of her sex. But all this is the purest surmise. In any case, her offense could not have been a grave one, as she returned in a few years to Mytilene, where she was adored by a fickle public as the glory of

her native city, and honored with altars and temples after her death. Her face was stamped upon coins —"though she was a woman," said Aristotle. The outlines are clear and strong, with the virile quality so marked in most statues of Greek women. She was also represented, with Alcæus, on a vase of the next century, as not only beautiful, but tall and stately.

A thousand years afterward a statue of her is said to have been one of the ornaments of the gymnasium at Byzantium. But coin and bust and statue give us many faces. Which was the real one? We are more familiar with the ideal Sappho in the modern portrait in which Alma-Tadema has so subtly caught the prophetic light of her soul, her eager intellect, her unconscious grace, and the slumbering passion in her eloquent eyes.

But recent critics tell us that even her beauty was a fiction of the imagination. Does she not say of herself, in the burning lines of Ovid, that she was brown and of low stature, though her name filled all lands? Or was it the sweet humility of love that made her own attractions seem to her slender and insufficient? She had been dead six hundred years or so when Ovid wrote, and his knowledge could not have been infallible.

Men of her own time called her the "beautiful Sappho," the "flower of the graces," and Greek

standards of beauty included height and stateliness. Perhaps they were under the magic spell of her genius, and indulged in glowing figures of speech. At all events, modern scholars are more literal, and they have mostly decided that she was a small, dark woman, of noble birth, who was early left a widow with one fair daughter, "Cleïs, the beloved, with a form like a golden flower." This was also the name of her own mother. One of her brothers held the honorable office of cup-bearer; the other went to Egypt, and, much to the displeasure of his gifted sister, married a woman of more charms than discretion, for whom he had paid a large ransom. This famous beauty of Naucratis became very rich, and, possibly by way of atonement for her sins, made a generous offering at the temple of Delphi. It was even said that she immortalized herself by building the third pyramid; but these tales, whether true or not, have been relegated to the region of myths. We learn from Sappho herself that she quarreled with her brother on account of this *mésalliance*. These are scant materials on which to base a life, but they include about all the facts we have of

> That mighty songstress, whose unrivaled powers
> Weave for the Muse a crown of deathless flowers.

We do not even know when or where or how she died, though epitaphs in the strain of these flattering and prosaic lines are numerous.

SAPPHO AND THE FIRST WOMAN'S CLUB

If her personality is veiled to us, still less do we know what manner of woman she was. The Attic comedians said unpleasant things about her a century after she died, and no one lived who could dispute them. Unfortunately, no infallible certificate of character can be found to protect a name that has been only a historic memory two or three thousand years. It is certain, however, that Æolian women had an honored place in society and literature. They formed a center of intellectual light in which the brilliant Sappho reigned supreme, and it was no unusual thing to see them at banquets and festivals with men. A well-born Athenian woman would have lost the rather illusory privileges of her position by such freedom. She was decorously ignorant and stayed at home. It was a foregone conclusion in Athens that a woman who was educated and a poet could not be respectable, and if the facts were against this conclusion, so much the worse for the facts.

Hence it was quite natural that Sappho, who did not go into seclusion or hide her light, should be decried by the satirists who had never seen her. A hundred years had sufficed to dim the incidents of her life, and left them free to invent any romance they chose. Her supposed love-affairs were a fruitful theme. That men died before she was born, or were born after she died, were impertinent details which were not held to interfere in the least with

their tender relations toward her. It is true that she wrote with a pen dipped in fire, but poems and tales of passion are not held even to-day as evidence against the fair fame of the author, whatever might be thought of her good taste. The Greek standards of morality were, at best, far from ours, and the frank naturalism of that age would be likely to shock our sense of decorum. But there is no indication that Sappho fell below these standards, and there is much to show that she rose above them. "I love delicacy," she writes, "and for me love has the sun's splendor and beauty." Alcæus, her fellow-poet and rival, addresses her as "pure, sweetly smiling Sappho." When he grows too ardent in his love, she rebukes him with gentle dignity: "Hadst thou felt desire for things good or noble, and had not thy tongue framed some evil speech, shame had not filled thine eyes, but thou hadst spoken honestly about it." And why did she feel her brother's disgrace so keenly if her own life was open to reproach?

We gather from herself that she was simple, amiable, and sunny, with a Greek love of life and all that pertains to it. "I am not of revengeful temper," she says, "but have a childlike mind." To this naïve confession she adds a choice bit of wisdom: "When anger spreads through the breast, guard thy tongue from barking idly." She tells her daughter not to mourn for her, as "a poet's home is not a fit place for lamentation." In the

spirit of her age and race, she insists that "death is an evil; the gods have so judged; had it been good, they would die."

Whatever her character and personal history may have been, we know that she wrote perfect lyrics with the spark of immortality in them, and gathered about her in the sunny island of Lesbos a circle of educated women who devoted themselves to the study of music, poetry, and the arts of refined living. Her genius has been recognized by poets, philosophers, and critics, as well as by simpler people who felt in her verse the "touch of nature" that "makes the whole world kin." She was the "divine Muse" of Plato, and shared the lyric throne with Pindar. Aristotle quoted her, and the austere Solon was so charmed with one of her odes that he said he could not die until he had learned it. Strabo writes that "at no period on record has any woman been known who compared with her in the least degree as a poet." Horace and Catullus imitated her, Ovid paraphrased her, but no one has caught the essence of her fiery spirit. Plutarch likens her to the "heart of a volcano." Longinus called her celebrated ode, "not a passion, but a congress of passions." Modern men have tried to put her golden-winged, fire-tipped words into another tongue, and turned with despair from the task. It is like trying to seize the light that blazes in the heart of the diamond, or

the fiery tints that hide in the opal. Perhaps Swinburne has best caught the spirit and the music of

> Songs that move the heart of the shaken heaven,
> Songs that break the heart of the earth with pity.

But even this exquisite artist in words says: "Where Catullus failed I could not hope to succeed."

There were nine volumes of her works in the days of Horace. To-day scarcely more than two hundred lines survive. Besides the two immortal odes, we have only fragments, gems scattered here and there through the writers of antiquity. To the everlasting discredit of an ignorant and fanatical age, the fathers denounced her, and the Byzantine emperors or the ascetic monks of a later time burned these so-called relics of paganism, to supply their place with books of devotion and lives of the saints. When the Hellenic spirit woke again, after a sleep of more than a thousand years, it was too late. These poems had perished with many monumental works of the intellect, and scholars thought their lives well spent if they found a line or two from the lost treasures.

But what was the life from which Sappho sprang, that she could reach the topmost bough of fame at a single flight? The lucid note, the tropical passion, the musical flow—these nature might give;

but where did she learn the fine sense of proportion, the perfection of metrical form, the mastery of the secrets of language, which placed her at the head of the lyric poets of Greece? The voices which might have told us are silent. Sparta was making heroic men and women, not literature. Athens was struggling through her stormy youth, and pluming her wings for the highest flight of all. The great Hebrew poetry was contemporary with Sappho, but she shows no trace of its influence. If she ever saw or heard it, her spirit was utterly alien to it. Still less had she in common with the inspired woman who led the armies of Israel to victory, six or seven centuries before, and chanted in stately measure the immortal song of their triumphs. It may be noted here that it was a woman who fired the hearts of these wandering people to brave deeds, when men drew back, timid and disheartened; it was a woman who went before them into battle; and it was a woman who broke into that impassioned poem which has come down to us across the ages as one of the great martial hymns of the world. But Deborah, the soldier, poet, prophetess, judge, and minstrel, never walked in the flowery paths of beauty and love. Her virile soul rose on the wings of a sublime faith, far above the things of sense. Behind that chorus of joy and exultation lay the long-baffled hopes, aspirations, and energies of an oppressed people, but it celebrated the apotheosis

of force. It was a barbaric song, wild and revengeful even in its splendid imagery and patriotic fervor. Miriam took her timbrel, and sang in the same strain of power and majesty, inspired by the same soaring imagination. But we find no touch of a woman's pity or tenderness in these pæans of victory. Their note is strong and exultant, alive with the lofty enthusiasm of a religious race in which the passion for art and beauty was not yet born. Sappho had caught nothing from these singers of an earlier time. She does not live in the bracing air of great ideals, nor does she dwell upon any vexed moral problems, after the manner of later poets. She is simply human, and strikes a personal note, the charm of which is unfailing, and will be fresh as long as flowers bloom, or men and women live and love.

This sweet-voiced singer seems to have risen full-fledged with the dawn, and her notes were liquid and clear as the song of the lark that soars out of the morning mists, and makes the sky vocal with melody. The freshness of the woods and the wild freedom of the air are in them. She loves the flowers, the running streams, the silver moon, the "golden-sandaled dawn," the "dear, glad angel of the spring, the nightingale." Hesperus, fairest of stars, "brings all that bright morning scattered," and smiles on "dark-eyed sleep, child of night." Again she says, "The stars about the fair moon hide their bright faces when she lights up all the

earth with silver." Was it the music of her voice that the doves heard "when their hearts turned cold and they dropped their wings"? She sings the praise of the purple hyacinth, the blushing apple-blossom, and the pale Lesbian rose, which she loves best of all. Dica is bidden to twine wreaths, "for even the blessed Graces look kindlier on a flowery sacrifice, and turn their faces from those who lack garlands." In the garden of the nymphs, "the cool water gurgles through apple-boughs, and slumber streams from quivering leaves."

To this passionate love of nature, so vividly told in rare and exquisite figures and in phrases "shot with a thousand hues," she adds a sensibility that responds to every breath that passes. "I flutter like a child after her mother," is her cry. She likens a bird to a flower that grows in a garden and has nothing to fear from the storms. A woman alone is like a wild flower which no one takes care of. She touches every phase of love from the divine tenderness of girlhood to the wild passion that shakes the soul, "a wind on the mountains falling on oaks." Her words flash and burn with the heart-consuming fire of her race. The lines in which she entreats the "star-throned Aphrodite" to have pity on her anguish, glow with a white heat. The swift-winged doves had brought the fickle goddess once before to soothe her pain with sweet promises and an immortal smile. Will she

not come again and lift the ache from her tortured soul, and give her what she asks?

The intensity of passion reaches its climax in the ode to Anactoria. Simple as it is, the vocabulary of "bitter-sweet" emotion is exhausted. In her most impassioned verses, our own Mrs. Browning does not quite forget to reflect about her love. She sets it forth in subtly woven thoughts, and lets it filter through her mind until it takes the color of it. Sappho sings of passion pure and artless. She does not think about it, she does not analyze it. It possesses her heart and imagination, and she tells it so simply, so sincerely, and so truly, that the familiar story never loses its charm. She sang in the childhood of the world, when people felt more than they thought, when love was a sensation, a joy, a passion, a pain, not a sentiment. If she did not spiritualize her theme, she purified it of the coarseness which made the love-songs of men, before and afterward, unfit for a delicate ear. This first touch of a woman in literature was to refine it, though it was many centuries before she had the power to lead men to take love from the exclusive domain of the senses and give it a soul.

II

BUT it is not alone as a singer that Sappho has come down to us. She was the leader of an intel-

lectual movement among women that was without a parallel in classic times. We may greet her as not only the first of woman poets, but as the founder of the first "woman's club" known to us. It is not certain that it had either a constitution or by-laws, and it discussed poetry and esthetics instead of science and social economics. But the measure of the intellect is not so much what we discuss as the quality of thought we bring into the discussion. It is easy enough to talk platitudes about literature or philosophy, and not so easy as one might imagine to talk wisely and well about poetry, or manners, or the art of living; and it is easier to do any of these things than it is to write what is worth talking about. The women who came to Sappho from the isles of the Ægean and the far hills of Greece seem to have been more intent upon writing poems than talking about them. There is no trace of brilliant conversation, or critical papers, or gathered sheaves of the knowledge that comes so freely under our own hand. Unfortunately, there was no secretary in this primitive club to take notes for posterity, or, if there was, the records have been lost. We know little of its sayings, though there are scattered traces of its doings. A few faint echoes have come to us across the centuries,—a verse, a line, a trait, a word, a heart-cry,—and that is all. Even these give us glimpses of its personal rather than of its intellectual side. Of the quality of its

work we cannot judge, as there is little of it left. That it was thought worthy of praise in its day, with Sappho as a standard, proves at least a high degree of merit. She was musician as well as poet, and trained many of the maidens for singing in sacred festivals, as well as in the arts of poetry and manners. When they married, she wrote their bridal odes. These she sang with the lyre, and one of her minor claims to fame was her invention of the plectrum, which brought out the full resources of this instrument. For Timas, who died unmarried, she wrote a touching elegy, which was sung at her tomb by the maidens, who cut off their curls as a token of sorrow.

The most gifted of Sappho's friends was Erinna, who died at nineteen, leaving among other things a poem of three hundred verses, which was said to deserve a place beside the epics of Homer. She sang of the sorrows of a maiden whose mother compelled her to spin when she wished to serve the Muses. There is also a tradition that she wrote an epitaph for a companion of "birth and lineage high," who died on her wedding day, and "changed bridal songs to sound of sob and tear." She was thought to surpass her teacher in hexameters. Sappho reproved her for being so scornful, and this is all the trait we have of this precocious child of genius, who preferred poetry to spinning. Her own epitaph speaks for itself:

SAPPHO AND THE FIRST WOMAN'S CLUB

> These are Erinna's songs; how sweet, though slight!
> For she was but a girl of nineteen years.
> Yet stronger far than what most men can write:
> Had death delayed, whose fame had equaled hers?

The only thing about Andromeda of which we are sure is that she dressed badly. "What woman ever charmed thy mind who wore a graceless dress, or did not know how to draw her garments about her ankles?" says Sappho to this formidable rival who stole away from her the fickle heart of Atthis. Of the brilliant Gorgo she grew tired. It is supposed that these two were at the head of other clubs or schools. Damophyla wrote a hymn to Artemis, the patron goddess of pure-souled maidens, which was modeled after Sappho and had great praise in its day, but no fragment of it is left.

"The fair-haired Lesbian," so famed as the poet of nature and passion, was not without a wise philosophy of life, and she assumes the rôle of mentor with pitiless candor. "He who is fair to look upon is good, and he who is good will soon be fair," is her motto; but she tells Mnasidica that her "gloomy temper spoils her, though she has a more beautiful form than the tender Gyrinna." Her house is devoted to the service of the Muses and must be cheerful, but she shuts out of an honorable immortality those who prefer worldly fortune to the pleasures of the intellect. To a rich woman without education she says: "Where thou diest there wilt

thou lie, and no one will remember thy name in times to come, because thou hast no share in the roses of Pieria. Inglorious wilt thou wander about in Hades and flit among its dark shades." She does not forget the finer graces of character, and evidently realizes the insidious fascination of material things. A moralist of to-day might be expected to tell us that "wealth without virtue is a dangerous guest," but we are not apt to credit the gifted singers of the ancient world with so much ethical insight, least of all the women of a sensuous and passionate race, which loved before all things beauty and the pleasures of life.

These few touches of wisdom, satire, and criticism, relieved by the love of Sappho for the friends and pupils to whom she is a model, an adviser, and an inspiration, throw a passing side-light on a group of clever women who flit like phantoms across the pages of history, most of them names and nothing more. They are of interest in showing us that the women of ages ago had the same aspirations that we have to-day, together with the same faults, the same virtues, and the same griefs, though they had not learned to moralize their sensations or intellectualize their passions. They show us, too, another phase of the elusive being who dazzled the world in its youth, leaving a few records traced in flame, and charged with an ever-baffling secret for all coming generations.

"Men, I think, will remember us hereafter," she says with subtle foresight, a line that Swinburne has so gracefully expanded in words taken in part from her own lips:

> I, Sappho, shall be one with all these things,
> With all high things forever; and my face
> Seen once, my songs once heard in a strange place,
> Cleave to men's lives, and waste the days thereof
> With gladness and much sadness and long love.

III

THE little coterie that wrote and talked and worked in the direction of finer ideals of life and manners, under the influence of the first woman poet of the world, has made the island of Lesbos, with its varying charm of sea and sky, and beautiful gardens, and singing birds, and sparkling fountains, and white cliffs outlined like sculpture in the crystalline air, luminous for all time. Of its four more or less famous poets, three were women, but Sappho has overshadowed all the rest. The very atmosphere woke the imagination, and made their hearts sing aloud with love and joy, varied by an occasional note of sorrow and pain. They came from all lands, these gifted maidens, to sit at the feet of Sappho, and to carry back to their distant homes the spirit of poesy and song which inspired so many Hellenic women to brave deeds as well as to tender and heroic words. But the passion of

southern seas became a religious enthusiasm in the sheltered and somber plains of Bœotia, where the lives of women had been so bare and hard, and Hesiod with his fellow-poets had given them such cold consolation. The songs of love were turned to processional hymns chanted by white-robed virgins as they brought offerings to the shrines of their gods.

It may have been the fame of Sappho that fired the genius of Myrtis and Corinna. Possibly some dark-eyed maiden had come back from Lesbos to spread the cult of knowledge and beauty, to found other esthetic clubs which should give a new impulse to women's lives. But when we try to give a living form to these famous poets, we grasp at shadows. We simply know that they lived and sang and had their little day of glory, with grand tombs at the end, and statues in various parts of Greece. They were teachers of Pindar, and Corinna is said to have defeated him five times in poetic contests at Thebes. Several centuries later there was still at Tanagra a picture representing her in the act of binding a fillet about her beautiful head, probably in token of these victories. Five crowns on her tomb also told the story. She was the friend and critic of the great lyric poet, but he said some unkind things of his successful rival, and insisted that the prize was due to her beauty rather than her genius. In spite of this, he went to her for counsel. She had advised him to use the Greek

myths in his poems, and he did it so lavishly that she wittily told him to " sow with the hand and not pour out of a sack." She was not quite generous, however, to her other friend, who also won a prize in the same manner. She says, " I blame the clear-toned Myrtis that she, a woman born, should enter the lists with Pindar." Why it was not proper for a sister poet who had taught both of them to do what she did herself, is not clear. She was called the first of the nine lyrical muses, who were the earthly counterparts of the " celestial nine." Myrtis was another. As the immortal Maids who dwelt on the slopes of Helicon were apt to visit their rivals with summary vengeance of much more serious character, perhaps their mortal representatives ought to be forgiven for a shade of jealousy so delicately implied.

Corinna left five books of poems, but small trace of them remains. Many of her verses were sung by maidens at religious festivals. Her modest niche in the temple of fame she owes mainly to her victories over Pindar, though she was second only to Sappho. Why her work, which was crowned with so many laurels, has not lived beside his, is one of the mysteries of buried ages. Perhaps it was because she made use of purely local legends and the local dialect, to which many thought she owed her success in her own day.

This wave of feminine genius that passed over the hills and valleys of Greece spent itself in little

more than a century on Doric soil. The last of the lyrical muses were Praxilla and Telesilla. We have a faint glimpse of the first at Sicyon, where she lived, and ancient critics gave her a place by the side of Anacreon. She drew her inspiration largely from mythology, and sang successfully on that favorite theme of poetic maidens, the death of Adonis. In the most critical age of Greece she was honored with a statue by Lysippus, which may be taken as sufficient proof that she was much more than a writer of sentimental verses.

More noted was Telesilla, the poet and heroine of Argos, an antique Joan of Arc, whose exaltation took a poetic form instead of a religious one. A curious little story, mythical or otherwise, is related of her. She was very ill and consulted the oracle, which told her to devote herself to the Muses. This species of mind-cure proved more effective than medicine, and she recovered under the magic of music and poetry. But she had the spirit of an Amazon as well as the genius of a poet. At a crisis in the war with Sparta, she armed the women, and manned the walls with slaves too young or too old to fight. The Spartans thought it discreditable to kill the women, and disgraceful to be beaten by them, so they retreated. The event was commemorated by an annual festival at which men appeared in feminine attire. Many centuries afterward a statue of Telesilla was still standing on a pillar in

front of the temple of Aphrodite at Argos. She held in her hand a helmet which she was about to put on her head, and several volumes of poetry were lying at her feet. Among her themes were the fated daughters of the weeping Niobe; she also wrote famous hymns to Artemis and Apollo. In spite of her allegiance to the Muses, she was more conspicuous for her service to Ares, who was henceforth worshiped at Argos as the patron deity of women.

The poetry of the Æolians was largely inspired by love, or a religion of beauty. But the Doric genius was not a lyrical one, and the passionate personal note which made the charm of Sappho and her contemporaries was lost in stirring martial strains. Women ceased to write or to be known at all in literature until a later time, when they dipped into philosophy a little, especially in the Dorian colonies, where they were educated and held in great consideration. Pythagoras had many feminine followers, and his school at Crotona was continued after his death by his wife Theano and a daughter who had assisted him. But most of them live, if at all, only as names, or in the reflected light of famous men whose disciples they were.

IV

AT no other time in the history of the world has the poetry of women reached the height or the

honor it attained in this first flowering of their intellect and imagination. One may doubtless take with a shade of reservation the "female Homers," like Anyta, of whom we have only a few epigrams, but there is a dim and rather vague tradition of seventy-six women poets in a scattered and by no means large population. In the revival of poetry during the Renaissance, there were about sixty, and none of them had the same quality of perfection which we find in Sappho. No one claims that we have equaled her to-day on her own ground, however superior our achievements may be in other directions.

That the Æolian women did so much with so little, and in spite of their limited advantages, is the best proof of their inborn gifts. Mediocre talents do not thrive in so adverse a soil, though this outburst of mental vigor belongs to a time when women had a degree of freedom and honor which for some reason they lost in the golden age of Athens. But the books they wrote were not printed, the manuscript copies were limited, most of them were lost with other classic works, and the few that escaped the pitiless fingers of time were destroyed by fanatics and iconoclasts. Yet one woman shines across twenty-five centuries as a star of the first magnitude, and we have fading glimpses of others who received honors due only to genius, or to talent of the first order. They were not

judged apart as women, for they have come down to us as peers of great men. The divine gift of genius was rare then, as now and always, but even in women it did not lack recognition. To prove the gift and exact the homage, perhaps in any age, we have simply to show the fruit, except in a decadence, when the finest fruit loses its savor for corrupted tastes. If the number who wrote for immortality was small, it must be remembered that probably there were not enough people in all Greece to make a good-sized modern city.

The statues that were reared to these women have long since vanished from the classic hills they graced, and their voices are heard only in the faintest of musical echoes. Most of them have fallen into eternal silence. That there were many others devoted to things of the intellect, but unknown to fame, it is fair to presume, as we see only those who look back upon us from the shining peaks of that far past, while the dark waters of oblivion have settled over the possible treasures of its sunny slopes and fragrant valleys. How many of our own women, with their myriads of books, lectures, and clubs, their university courses, their versatile intellects, and their unlimited freedom, are likely to be quoted two or three thousand years hence, and set in the firmament to live forever?

To be sure, we stand upon a higher moral and social level, we have more knowledge, our field of

action is broader, our ideals of virtue are higher, and we have privileges and pleasures of which they never dreamed. It is quite impossible to put ourselves on the simple plane of these women. The world has grown old and sophisticated; we have learned to classify ourselves, to choose our fields of knowledge, to consecrate our talents to what we call larger uses. Perhaps we never again can reach the lyrical heights of these children of passion, imagination, and song. Our triumphs are of another sort. But whatever intellectual distinctions we may attain, it is to this youth of the world that we must look for the apotheosis of love and beauty.

It is needless to ask why we can point to no second Sappho. There is but one Parthenon. Broken and crumbling, it stands in its white majesty forever alone. The Hellenic spirit is as dead as the gods of Olympus.

GLIMPSES OF THE SPARTAN WOMAN

[redacted]

GLIMPSES OF THE SPARTAN WOMAN

• Homeric and Spartan Types Compared •
• Training of the Spartan Woman •
• Her Education Superior to that of Men •
• Her Executive Talent •
• Her Heroism •
• Agesistrata • Cratesiclea • Chelonis •
• The Puritans of the Classic World •

GLIMPSES OF THE SPARTAN WOMAN

THE strength and vigor of the Homeric types reappear in the Spartan woman, but without their sweetness and charm. Was this charm the subtle touch of the poet's imagination, or was it due in part to the setting that brought into relief their most lovable qualities? Their central point of character was a domestic one, and round this clustered all the gentler virtues. The central trait of the Spartan woman was patriotism, and to this even the tenderest affections were subordinate. The colder light of history shows them in outlines that are hard and stern. The fine symmetry of an ideal womanhood was lost in the excess of a single virtue that overshadowed all the others. Some one tells a mother who is waiting for tidings of a battle that her five sons have perished. "You contemptible slave," she replies, "that is not what

I wish to know. How fares my country?" On learning that it was victorious, she says, "Willingly then do I hear of the death of my sons." "A glorious fate!" exclaims another, to a friend who offered her sympathy for the loss of her boy in war. "Did I not bear him that he might die for Sparta?" Here lay the first and last duty of these women. Natural affection, private interest, inclination, everything we deem sacred, even to life, was at the bidding of the State, which strangled itself and its citizens with petty tyrannies in the name of liberty. They were dedicated to the State, ordered to rear men for the State, sacrificed to the State. This destiny they accepted without a murmur, finding in it their glory and their pride.

Even as children the Spartan women caught the spirit of civic devotion, which was to be the dominant one in their lives. An anecdote in point is told of the little Gorgo, who was afterward the wife of the brave Leonidas. When a child of eight years, she happened to be in the room one day while a messenger was trying to bribe her father to aid the Persians. He offered ten talents at first, and gradually raised the sum until the child, suspecting danger, said: "Go away, father; this stranger will corrupt you." It is pleasant to record that her advice was laughingly taken. When she was grown to womanhood, she rendered great service to her country, and proved her own sagacity,

by finding a message of vital concern so concealed in a wax tablet that no one had suspected it. "You Lacedæmonians are the only women in the world to rule men," said a foreigner to her. "We are the only women who bring forth men," was the ready reply. When her distinguished husband went away to his last battle, with forebodings of his fate, he could find no better parting words than these: "Marry nobly and bear brave sons." We might regard the consolation as questionable, but it shows the inexorable tyranny of a single idea.

It was from Sparta that the beautiful Helen sailed away on that fateful day which changed the face of the primitive world, and the tradition of her loveliness was not lost. The Spartan women were still noted for beauty of a healthy, vigorous, luxuriant sort, but it seems to have lacked the distinctly feminine and magical quality that raised Helen to the ranks of the goddesses. They were of firmer mold and less sensuous type. Aphrodite fared badly among the sturdy people in the valley of the Eurotas. She had but one temple, and even there she sat armed with a sword and veiled, with ignominious fetters on her feet. Artemis, active, fleet of foot, and strong, held the place of honor. Delicacy and tenderness were marks of inferiority which Spartan training tended to efface. These brave, decided, clear-headed, and efficient women had

abundant heroism, but little of the warm, sympathetic temperament which we call womanly and they called weak. This goes far to prove that, within certain limits, the accepted standard of what is womanly, and what is not, depends largely upon custom, or fashion, or expediency, and suggests some unpleasant possibilities if the race of women should be fully educated to the hard uses and material ideals of a purely industrial or commercial life, as outlined in the brains of many modern social reformers. Such uses may be a present necessity rather than a choice, but whether the gain in strength and independence will compensate for the inevitable loss of many gentler qualities is one of the problems for the future to solve. In any case, the old theory of a divine law that has fixed the nature as well as the status of women in the economy of creation, is likely to be seriously disturbed, as it was in the Sparta of old. In the martial chorus that called itself the song of liberty, the musical, love-inspired voices of women were lost. It celebrated the apotheosis of force, which has always been fatal to the finer and more spiritual gifts of the less militant sex. But for once it served them indirectly a good turn, in spite of certain hardening effects upon the character and manners. This is quite evident when we compare the Doric woman with the secluded Athenian of softer ways but with no outlet for her intelligence, and apparently no influence.

GLIMPSES OF THE SPARTAN WOMAN

Fortunately the supreme aim of the founders of Sparta was one which they were wise enough to know could not be attained without a larger freedom and development for women. It was a one-sided training that was given them, and the freedom was not altogether satisfactory from our point of view, if indeed we should call it freedom at all. But as an important factor in the State they were duly honored. It was an accepted theory that brave and vigorous men must spring from brave and vigorous women, so the aim of all their discipline was to make strong and healthy mothers. No delicate girl was allowed to marry, for the same reason that no sickly child was allowed to live. To insure the vitality of the race and the consequent glory of the State, girls were trained with boys in athletic exercises. They ran, wrestled, and boxed with them in public,—sometimes with no veil but their modesty,—danced with them at festivals, and marched freely with them in religious processions. All this naturally gave them masculine manners, and inevitably led to a spirit of independence and a virile character. The more refined Athenians criticized them and looked upon them much as the conventional Parisian of to-day, who will not send a daughter across the street without a chaperon, looks upon the irrepressible American girl of the frontier. Contrary also to the usual fashion, it was the maidens who had the privilege of living in

the public view. They did not even veil their faces, as the married women did.

With all their mannish tendencies, the Spartan women are said to have been noted for purity of character. It is safe perhaps to take with a degree of reservation the assertion that immorality according to their standards was practically unknown. We might at least justly find fault with the standards, and object to the material view taken of relations which we are in the habit of investing with a delicate halo of romance. It was an affair of the State, however, rather than of the individual, and it is a nice point to decide as to the morality of women who accepted from necessity certain prescribed modes of living in which they had no choice. So peculiar were the general notions of decorum that it was considered disgraceful for a bridegroom to be seen in the company of his wife; yet he could exchange her at will or at the command of the rulers, and jealousy was laughed at as a "vain and womanish passion." But it was the pride of the Spartans that no invasion of the sanctity of the home was ever heard of! They excused themselves for what we should call moral delinquencies of the worst sort—if indeed they thought any excuse needed, which is not probable—by the convenient maxim that the end justifies the means. The interests of the State were above any moral law whatever. No doubt the arbitrary manner in

which women were often disposed of for the public good, or at the caprice of their lords, seemed to them a better sort of fate than living in seclusion, as their Attic sisters did, under the roof of a man who gave them no liberty, and no society, not even his own. They certainly were not troubled with an excess of sentiment; but marriages were, on the whole, happy, and love was often a factor in them, which was rarely the case among their more civilized neighbors. It was not in the nature of these practical people to look at things from an esthetic point of view. Their notions were confessedly utilitarian. To-day we should call many of them scientific. Happily, modern science has not yet meddled quite so far with the rights of the individual, though clearly headed in that direction.

If the Spartan woman did not relish such cavalier treatment, she had the small comfort of knowing that men were not free themselves, and that really, on the whole, she had the best of it. "The door of his court is the boundary of every man's freedom," was a Lacedæmonian maxim. Outside of it, all of his movements were controlled by the State. In this paradise of socialism, he was punished for not marrying, for waiting too long, and for marrying the wrong woman, that is, one who was too old, or too young, or too rich, or too far above or below him in station. Archidamus, one of their rulers, was fined for marrying a little

woman, because she would "bring them a race of pygmies instead of kings." There were special penalties for those who sought money instead of merit and suitability. The fortune-hunter fared badly in Sparta. We have grown civilized and changed all that. A man suffered his penalty for remaining single, even if he were a coward whom no one was permitted to marry, which seems doubly hard. The poor bachelors who would not or could not take a wife, were stripped and marched in a procession about the market-place on a cold day once a year, as a fit target for ridicule and contempt, not to say more tangible missiles. If any woman had a private grudge, she might vent it with impunity, even to blows, while the unfortunate victim was forced to chant his own miserere. Maiden ladies of mature age were rare among the hills of Lacedæmon.

Notwithstanding the low ideals which would seem to have reduced the women of Sparta to the position of useful animals, valued solely for their physical vigor and fitness to be mothers of a hardy race, they evidently constituted a leisure class which had a monopoly of whatever learning and refinement were to be found there. They lived in such comfort as they could command, while their husbands slept on cold beds of reeds, dined on black bread and coarse rations at the public table, and practised every form of asceticism to fit them-

selves for war. Their sons were taken from them at seven, to be put under the training of men and subjected to the same stern discipline. The spinning, weaving, and other work of the family was given to slaves, so that the privileges of luxury and idleness fell to the women alone. They came and went as they chose, and were even thought to have intellects worth cultivating. Men looked upon literary and artistic pursuits as effeminate. A Spartan king replied to some one who brought to his notice the greatest musician of his time, by pointing to his cook as the best maker of black broth. This social Utopia in which the individual was lost in the mass, and no one could safely be superior to his neighbor, was the blessed haven of mediocrity and what we should call indolence. War was the only honorable business; even trade and the mechanic arts were left to slaves. A Spartan visiting Athens was much disturbed on hearing that a man had been fined for idleness, and naïvely asked to see one who was punished for keeping up his dignity. Life was materialized, and all fine ideals were destroyed save the single one of national glory, for which they willingly stifled personal feeling and personal talent. Things of the intellect and spirit were quite ignored.

But the Doric women had to some extent the tastes of the Æolians, and were as a rule far better educated than their husbands. We hear of clubs

or associations of women for the cultivation of the mind, and for teaching girls after the fashion of the time. In music they excelled. Aristophanes introduces in "Lysistrata" choruses of Spartan and Athenian maidens who sing in friendly rivalry. Many of the *parthenia*, or processional hymns, were written by foreign poets for these young girls, whose spiritual aspirations found vent in that way. They did not give voice to personal emotions, but to great religious or patriotic enthusiasms.

Whatever education may have been given to women, it is not likely that their intellectual standards were very broad or very high; at least, we have no visible evidence of it, as we find no living trace of their talents for some centuries after the brief poetic flowering that followed Sappho, and even then not in Sparta. It was among the Dorians of a later time, and mainly in the colonies, that the feminine taste for literature revived, but it took a didactic or philosophical form, and they wrote in prose.

The talent of the Spartan women was largely executive, and they were noted for judgment, as well as for heroism. As nurses they were in great demand in other parts of Greece. A strong proof of their gifts of administration is found in the fact that they had equal rights of inheritance with men, and came in time to own two fifths of the land and a large share of the personal property. This gave

them a dignity and influence not accorded to their sex elsewhere. Aristotle did not like their freedom and power. He claimed that they ruled their husbands too imperiously; also, that they were liable to be troublesome in times of war, as it was impossible to bring them under military discipline. If they ruled the rulers, he thought that the results would be the same as if they ruled in their own right. Plutarch tells us that "the Spartans listened to their wives, and women were permitted to meddle more with public business than men with the domestic." Again he says that "women considered themselves absolute mistresses in their houses; indeed, they wanted a share in affairs of State, and delivered their opinions with great freedom concerning the most weighty matters." But freedom is relative, and a little of it goes a great way where there has been, as a rule, none at all. It does not seem that any fears on this subject were realized, as their influence, so far as we know, was conservative, and they were subordinate in theory if not always in fact. "When I was a girl I was taught to obey my father, and I obeyed him," said a woman, when asked to do something of doubtful propriety; "and when I became a wife I obeyed my husband; if you have anything just to urge, make it known to him first." A clever if not very chivalrous writer of the time says: "It becomes a man to talk much, and a woman to rejoice in all

she hears"—a comfortable arrangement for dull husbands, who would be sure at least of an appreciative audience at home.

But we find instances of heroic devotion among these hardy women, for which we look in vain among the ignorant and secluded wives of Athens. It is a pity that Plutarch did not give some of them a distinct place in his gallery of celebrities. He had a superior wife himself, a well-bred woman of dignity, tenderness, great mental vigor, simple taste, and distinguished virtues, who was above the vanities of her time, and bore sorrow like a philosopher. He loved her devotedly, praised her fortitude, and admired her strength. This perhaps accounts for the fact that he was kindly disposed toward women in general, and thought that their fame should be known, since love of glory was not confined to one sex. But if he did not set them on a pinnacle of their own, he has shown us by various anecdotes that they could counsel like seers and die like heroes. In the decline of Sparta, when Agis planned to restore the old simplicity it had lost with the coming of luxury and foreign ways, he asked the aid of his mother, the brave Agesistrata, a woman of great wealth and influence. She thought the division of property he proposed neither wise nor practicable, and advised him against it. But when she found his heart set upon it as a means of winning glory, as well as bringing back the people

to virtue and simpler manners, she consented not only to give up her own great fortune, but to induce others to join her. As the wealth of Sparta was largely in the hands of women who were less disinterested and did not care to lose either their luxuries or their power, this socialistic movement failed, and its self-sacrificing leaders were put to death. When Agesistrata was led into the prison to see her son, he lay strangled before her. She tenderly placed her own dead mother by his side, and baring her neck with calm dignity, said: "May this prove for the good of Sparta."

In the second attempt to restore the prestige of the falling State, Cratesiclea rivals the great heroines of the dramatists in her noble self-surrender. Ptolemy demanded, as the price of his alliance, that Cleomenes should send his mother and son to Egypt as hostages. When she heard of it she smilingly said: "Was this the thing you have so long hesitated to tell me? Send this body of mine at once where it will be of the most use to Sparta, before age renders it good for nothing." She went without tears, saying that no one must see them weep. Finding afterward that the king was hampered by the fear that some ill might befall them, she sent him word to do what was best, and never mind what became of an old woman and a little child. This enterprise, too, was a futile one, but the women who had inspired men with their own courage and

devotion died as bravely as they had lived. It is a touching scene where the young and beautiful wife of Panteus pays the last offices to her dead friends, then, folding her robe modestly about her, tranquilly tells the executioner to do his work.

" In women too there lives the strength of battle," says Sophocles, and nowhere could he have found such heroic examples as among the rugged hills of Sparta. Out of such material, Antigones and Iphigenias are created.

Beneath a discipline of the affections so severe that it seems as if they must have been crushed altogether, we sometimes fall upon unsuspected depths of tenderness. Chelonis left her husband in his day of power, to care for her father, who had been deposed and was in disgrace and need. When the political tables were turned, and her father was again on the throne, she pleaded with eloquence and tears for her husband's life. Her wise and tactful words saved him, but he was exiled. She was urged by her family to stay and enjoy the fruits of their victory, but, turning sorrowfully away, she took her children, kissed the altar where they had found a sanctuary, and went out with her disgraced husband to poverty and obscurity.

We cannot measure these Spartan women by the standards of to-day. They did not belong to the age of university courses, society functions, and Christian ideals. Love as we understand it played

a small part in their lives, and of romance there is little trace, though examples of conjugal affection are not rare. Of what we call learning they probably had very little, and of esthetic taste still less, but of clear judgment, solid character, and fearless courage, they had a great deal. They were trained as companions and helpers of men, not as their toys, though they were always subject to them. It was a simple life they led—a life with few graces and few of our complexities. They were the Puritans of the classic world, without the Puritan conscience or moral sense, but with more than Puritan courage and fortitude.

THE ATHENIAN WOMAN, ASPASIA, AND THE FIRST SALON

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• Vassalage of the Athenian Woman •
• Her Ignorance and Seclusion •
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THE ATHENIAN WOMAN, ASPASIA, AND THE FIRST SALON

I

THE Athenians agreed with the opinion ascribed to Pericles that "the best wife is the one of whom the least is said either of good or evil." But this wise statesman does not seem to have found his theory agreeable in practice, as he sent away his own wife, who was quite innocent even of local fame, to put in her place the cleverest and most talked of woman of her time. She accepted the inevitable with becoming philosophy, if not gratefully, and it must be said to his credit that he was kind enough to help her to another husband. But what became of his theory? One is tempted to think that Thucydides, who put these words into his mouth, was speaking largely for himself, as it is clear that he thought women too unimportant, if

not too precious, to be talked about; else why did the great historian so utterly ignore them?

It is a significant fact which upsets many pleasant little theories about the superior justice of a democracy, that women who shared the power and glory of their husbands in the heroic age,—even if they had little of their own,—and preserved a measure of influence under the rule of kings in historic times, lost their honored position in republican Athens. In a rule of the people they had no longer the prestige of an aristocracy, and they did not count politically. As they held no recognized place of honor, and it was not respectable to shine by their talents, they had no apparent claim to consideration. They might stand on a pedestal to add to the glory of men, they might grace a hereditary throne for the honor of a family, but it never occurred to the classic world that woman sprang, as the witty Frenchman said, "from the side of Adam, and not from his feet."

To all intents and purposes, the Attic women were slaves, with no rights and few privileges. We do not know much about them directly, as they left no record of themselves, and very little was written of them except by the satirists, who are always ready to distort the truth in order to "point a moral or adorn a tale." Historians were strangely silent regarding them; unless of royal lineage, women were too insignificant. It is diffi-

cult, in the face of the few facts we know, to credit the brilliant Athenians with any chivalry. We must either suppose that the poets were a sour and disappointed race, or that they reflected the spirit of their time. Apart from the few great ideals that lived in the imaginations of men, everything that has come down to us shows the light estimate in which women were held. They were a lower order of beings, and anything done by their advice was invalid. "Women are an evil," says the comedian, "and yet, my countrymen, one cannot set up a house without evil; for to be married or not to be married is alike bad." This arrogant and contemptuous tone runs through the Attic literature, as I have shown more fully elsewhere.

From the vague and shadowy outlines of a life that was practically shut out from the light of day twenty-five centuries ago, we cannot gather with certainty even the moral and domestic value of women who were treated with lofty disdain by poets, satirists, and historians alike. But we do know that intellectually they counted for nothing, within the pale of orthodox society. At a period when the central idea was culture, when art was at its zenith, and there were giants in literature, the wives and daughters of men noted before all things for brilliancy and *esprit* had fallen into hopeless ignorance and vassalage. They lacked even the companionship and the small diversions of the Ori-

ental harem, where the inmates, though they had only a small fraction of a husband, could break the monotony by gossiping or quarreling with the other wives. The women of the better class at Athens had special apartments, usually in the upper story, so that they could not go out without being seen. Men went to market themselves or sent their slaves. We learn from Aristophanes that they often put their wives under lock and key, with a seal when they went away, also that they kept Molossian hounds to frighten away possible lovers. A woman addressed her husband as "master," was always a minor, and could transact no business on her own account, which even Plato thought unjust. If he died she was not his heir, but the ward of her son or of some male relative. In her marriage she was not consulted, and she was never supposed to know any man but the one chosen for her. Solon, who wished to prevent mercenary marriages, decreed that no dowries should be given, and that the bride could have only three suits of clothes; later, unions were arranged by the families, on a basis of equal fortunes. Infidelity on the part of the husband was no ground of complaint. As wives were so closely guarded there does not seem to have been much danger of indiscretions, but they were sent away on the slightest suspicion, and their punishments were carried to the utmost refinement of cruelty. In spite of this surveillance, possibly

because of it, sins against morality were more frequent than in Sparta.

After the age of sixty, women were permitted to go to funerals outside of their families, if they would not mourn too violently. These occasions must have been rather welcome than otherwise, as Greek funerals were not hopelessly solemn affairs, except to the immediate family. Brides had the special privilege of sitting at table at their own wedding banquets, to which only relatives or very near friends were asked. The amusements of women seem to have consisted largely in looking out of the window and making their toilets. If they went to the theater at all, they were limited to tragedy and had to take back seats.

We have an account of one model husband who is not content that his young wife should simply know how to spin, weave, and direct her maids, so he tries to educate her. She is only fifteen, and he says that she has lived under the strictest restraint so that she might "see as little, hear as little, and ask as few questions as possible." When he has her properly domesticated so that she dares to speak in his presence, he explains their mutual responsibilities in terms that must have mystified this child of nature a little, tells her to do well what the gods have suited to her and men approve, to use no cosmetics or aids to beauty, and to knead bread or fold linen for exercise, since she must not

walk out. The main thing he dwells upon is the necessity of looking closely after their common fortunes; but she has also to take care of the children, and nurse the slaves when they are ill. He kindly admits that if she is superior to him she will be mistress,—taking good care, however, that such an unfortunate state of affairs shall not exist so far as education is concerned,—and assures her that the better she serves the interests of his family and household, the more she will be honored. This is all very well so far as it goes, and we may readily admit that it is of more vital importance to administer the affairs of one's family with judgment and dignity than to talk about art or read Homer. But the docile wife had a housekeeper as well as plenty of slaves, and, naturally, abundant leisure. It certainly implied a degree of what Socrates called "manly understanding" on her part, to follow her husband's abstruse reasoning on the duties of women, and his minute instructions for carrying them out; yet this wise representative of the most civilized race the world has known never so much as hints that she has an intellect.

Socrates listens with great interest to this advanced theory of wife-training as it is unfolded to him, and sagely remarks that the husband is responsible for her errors if he does not properly teach her. It seems that he did not try the system on Xanthippe, or if he did it was a dismal failure,

as the much-abused woman is never quoted as a model or a saint, and we do not hear that he taxed himself with her shortcomings. He said that he married her for the excitement of conquest—the same motive that leads a man to try his power over a high-spirited horse; also as a discipline, because he was sure that he could endure every one else if he could endure her. It would be curious to know what she thought about it, but one cannot help suspecting that she had the lion's share of the discipline, and that Socrates was a greater success as a philosopher and talker than as a husband.

There was one exception, however, to this rigid seclusion, a small recognition of the fact that women probably have souls. They were allowed a part in religious festivals, and these were events in their lives. They meant a breath of fresh air and a glimpse of the outer world. Perhaps they meant also a little spiritual consolation, which must often have been greatly needed; but of this we are not sure. The Hellenic divinities were not eminently consoling, and the wise Athena was particularly unsympathetic, though the Athenian virgins had at least the pleasure of making her richly ornamented robes, and putting them on her once a year. The woman in the comedy says that at seven she could carry the peplum in the procession, at ten she ground cakes for the patron goddess, and when she

grew to be a beautiful maiden, she had charge of the sacred basket.

One can imagine the flutter of pleasure with which the young girls of the golden age of Athens donned their white draperies and gold-embroidered mantles to march in the Panathenaic procession to the Acropolis. Their snowy veils floated airily in the breeze, as they went up the marble steps of the propylæa chanting choral hymns and carrying in their hands the branches of silvery olive to lay at the feet of the stately goddess. How bright the sky! how blue the sparkling sea! How beautiful the white temples and colonnades, alive with sculptured heroes! Before them rose Hymettus in its robe of violet haze, and the cone of Lycabettus, sharply outlined in the clear air. Sheltered behind the low hills on the other side of the vast olive-groves, the magnificent temple of Eleusis, with its heart of mystery, towered in its peerless majesty, and the restless waves of Salamis lapped the shore at its side. This world of beauty was young then and fresh, with no age-old tragedies to sadden the brilliant crowd that wound in dazzling array through the forest of columns and statues. The flower of Athens was there—brave, handsome, and clever men, poets, artists, and philosophers, warriors on prancing horses, beautiful women and laughing children. If the uncaged maidens were tempted to flirt a little with their soft, dark eyes, who can blame

them? They were young and human, companionship was sweet, and they too had tender hearts, though small account was made of them.

But the day ends. The sacred Athena is resplendent in her new robe. The gay crowd moves back past the exquisite little Ionic temple of Victory and down the massive steps into the agora, where life goes on as before. Men throng the porticos and talk of the new play of Sophocles, or the last statue of Phidias, or the prospects of war, or any of the thousand and one things that come uppermost in the affairs of a great city. When the shadows fall and the stars come out bright and shining in that crystal air, they gather at banquets or symposia, where flute-players and dancing-girls are brought in to amuse them, or some Lais or Phryne of the hour enthralls them by her beauty and dazzles them with her wit. (But the wives and daughters of these men, who do not see fit to educate them for companions, go back to their lonely homes and to an isolation from all social and intellectual interests as deep as if they were asleep in the sculptured tombs of the Via Sacra.)

(The women of Athens fulfilled their duties with becoming modesty, so far as we know. They were respectably ignorant, and did not encroach upon the time-honored privileges of men.) It is true that Elpinice, the sister of Cimon, was a trifle strong-minded, and, taking the Spartan women as models,

went about alone; but we do not hear that she had any following. Unpleasant things were said about her, which we are safe in doubting, as unpleasant things have always been said of women who presumed to have opinions of their own, or to walk outside of the straight line of tradition. At all events, a rich Athenian fell in love with her, and was glad to take her without a dowry and pay the fine of her distinguished father. But it is certain that no appreciable number of Attic ladies were disposed to incur the odium of public opinion so distinctly expressed in these words:

> Good women must abide within the house;
> Those whom we meet abroad are nothing worth.

Why in the face of such reverent submission were they so contemptuously spoken of? We are often told to-day that women cannot expect any privileges when they want rights. It may be pertinent to ask, in the name of consistency, why they had no privileges when they sat humbly at the feet of their husbands and demanded no rights?

But it was among these women that the great dramatists lived and created the master-pieces of the world. It may be that they saw and felt the cheerless side of so fettered a life, and that is why they painted their heroines in such somber colors, too often innocent victims of men's misdeeds, and doomed to suffering with the sad inevitability of

fate. But the noble character and fine intelligence given to so many of them must have had some counterpart in reality. Did the city that produced Antigone, Iphigenia, and Alcestis, have no great women, or did their creators look elsewhere for the moral dignity that made them possible? And where were the models found? Not, surely, among the hetæræ whose power, whatever it may have been, was not a moral one. Not even among the goddesses, who were notoriously vain, selfish, crafty, and cruel. We know that a thousand untold tales of virtue and heroism are hidden behind closed doors, and we may well believe they were not without precedent among these apparently colorless and pent-up lives.

Then it is easy perhaps to err in assuming that there were no women who rose above hard conditions into a degree of companionship with their husbands. It is true they had no education and were excluded from the society of men who had it, but it is impossible to suppose that the women of so brilliant a race were utterly without the clear perception and flexible intelligence which made its men so famous. Nor can we infer invariable misery. There have been good men in all ages who loved their families, and women whose light could not be extinguished. The great Cimon is said to have had an ardent affection for his wife, and he was inconsolable after her death, though he did not curb his wandering fancies while she lived. Socrates

mentions Niceratus as "one who was in love with his wife and loved by her." There is a familiar anecdote of Themistocles that puts him in a pleasant light. He said in a laughing way that his little son was greater than any man in Greece, "for the Athenians command the Greeks, I command the Athenians, his mother commands me, and he commands his mother." If reports be true, however, the influence of his wife was largely theoretical, as it did not suffice to keep him from doing some very disreputable things. But he wished a worthy man for his daughter, rather than a rich one, saying he "would prefer a man without money to money without a man." Aristotle is not quoted among the champions of women, but he tenderly loved his own wife, whom he married in spite of the reverses which had ruined her family. Her life was brief, but he left orders that when he died her remains should be transferred to the tomb which held his own, according to her last request. This was done long years after her death, though he had another wife whose virtues he commends, asking his friends to give her kind attention and provide her with a suitable husband if she wishes to marry again. These instances among well-known men are worthy of note, and others might be cited. But the exceptions prove the rule, and the very fact that it was a matter of comment when a man was in love with his wife shows that it was rare.

II

IT would be a mistake, however, to suppose that the great Athenians were without the sympathy and influence of educated women; indeed, it may be safely said that no great things in art or literature have ever been done without this inspiration. The ignorance of the Attic woman had its natural protest, though it did not come from an orthodox source. Respectability was on the side of servitude. It had a dull time, but it was decorous, and consoled itself, as it has often done since, with the reflection that dullness was its natural lot. No doubt it took pride in its nothingness, and looked with haughty disdain upon the clever foreign women who were free to do as they chose. Fashion is imperious, not to say cruel, and even the Chinese lady hobbles along on her distorted feet with a happy consciousness of distinction that amply repays her for all her suffering.

But social conventions had small weight with the foreign hetæræ or companions, who had no legal rights, and no caste to lose. The real power of women was in their hands. They were intelligent, often gifted, and the better class had refined and graceful manners, which the Athenian wives evidently had not. It was said of them that they were delicate at table, and not like the native women, who

"stuffed their cheeks, and tore off the meat." They were also noted for wit and *esprit*, a quality of volatilized intellect that has always had great social charm. These advanced women of the day, who cast into the shade their illiterate sisters, monopolized both attention and honors. Men praised the good women who stayed at home and looked after their families, but sought the society of clever ones who did neither of these fine things. With curious inconsistency, they found the culture which was reprehensible and out of the proper order of nature in their wives and daughters so charming in other women as to merit the highest distinction. Poets sang of them, artists immortalized them, statesmen and philosophers paid court to them.

> 'T is not for nothing that where'er we go
> We find a temple of hetæræ there,
> But nowhere one to any wedded wife,

says the poet.

Unfortunately, talent and the virtues did not always go together, and it is impossible, at this distance, to determine with any certainty who were good and who were not. In the conservative circles of Athens, intelligence itself was a vice in women, and put them under a ban. They might pray to Athena, and offer incense to her, and embroider her robes, but it would not do to take this personification of wisdom and knowledge for a model; indeed, it is

not quite clear why so dangerous a representative of the sex that was thought to have no intellect worth considering should have been chosen to preside over all the Attic divinities. There was a time, according to Varro, when it had been customary for women to take part with men in public councils. In the early ages they voted to name Athens after Athena, outvoting the men by one. Poseidon was angry, and the sea overflowed. To appease the god, the citizens imposed a punishment on their wives. They were to lose their votes, the children were to receive no more their mother's name, and they were no longer called Athenians. Perhaps this is why they were relegated forever after to ignorance and obscurity. Athena, however, retained her power, and men still worshiped the gray-eyed goddess in the abstract, as their fathers had done, doubtless quite content that the superfluous wisdom of woman should be given a pedestal so high and remote that it was not likely to cause serious inconvenience in family relations. But their personal devotion was largely reserved for Aphrodite, who was more beautiful and facile, if not so wise, and still less fit to be held up as a worthy example for her sex. The race had not greatly changed since its men went to their death for the "divine Helen," and thought the world well lost for a sight of her radiant beauty.

The witty Phryne, whose exquisite face and form was made immortal by Apelles and Praxiteles, was

given a statue of gold between two kings at Delphi. In the cypress-grove at Corinth there was a monument to the beautiful Lais, who had enriched the city with fine architecture. Lamia built a splendid portico for the people of Sicyon, and a temple at Athens was consecrated to her under the name of Aphrodite. One of the most striking and costly monuments in Greece was also erected there to Pythionice. The wit and fascination of Glycera brought her the honors due to a queen. Some of her letters to Menander were preserved, and they were said to show not only a tender and delicate sentiment, but a fine intellectual sympathy with her poet lover. No doubt the tributes offered to the notoriously dissolute women were largely the expression of a beauty-loving people who cherished "art for art's sake."

But there were other women with serious gifts of a high order, who were far less likely to be honored with temples and statues. Leontium, the disciple and favorite of Epicurus, wrote a treatise against Theophrastus that was quoted by Cicero as a model of style. She had a thoughtful face, and was painted in a meditative attitude by Theodorus. It matters little whether Diotima was Arcadian priestess or philosopher; she was the friend of Socrates, the counselor of the wisest and subtlest of men. It was her high and spiritual conception of love that he quoted at the famous symposium of Plato, raising

the conversation from a curious blending of unholy passion and metaphysical subtlety to a region of light. Famous among the disciples of Pythagoras was Perictione, who attracted the attention of Aristotle by writing on such grave subjects as "Wisdom" and "The Harmony of Woman." She was duly conservative, and accepted the passive position of her sex, dwelling on their need of a forbearing spirit. Possibly this amiable attitude accounts in part for the kind consideration of the philosopher. More advanced and less popular was Hipparchia, the wife of Crates, an eminent Cynic, who called the statue of Phryne "a votive offering of the profligacy of Greece." She recognized virtue as the supreme end of life, but contended that "virtue is the same in a man as in a woman." To Theodorus she said: "What Theodorus is not wrong in doing, the same thing Hipparchia ought not to be wrong in doing." That she was severely attacked goes without saying. Such sentiments were subversive of the inalienable rights of man, in the code of the classic world. It was easier and more agreeable to discredit the woman than to raise their own standards. Themista, the wife of Leon, was a philosopher, corresponded with Epicurus, and was called by Cicero "a sort of female Solon." Lastheneia was a pupil of Plato, and went so far as to disguise herself in a man's robes in order to hear him discourse at the Academy.

Perhaps it is unfair to group these women together. They were of different shades, and not all contemporary. Some of them were Athenians. Of most of them we have no knowledge except such as may be gathered from a few passing words in connection with famous men, and even this is involved in doubt and contradiction. What were the attractions of Archaianassa, to whom Plato wrote sonnets, or did she ever exist outside of the realm of dreams?

For dear to me Theoris is,

says Sophocles. Did he find in her the talent that inspired his own? And what was the secret of Archippa's influence, that he should have left her his fortune? Or is she, too, a myth? Nor can we divine the gifts that drew the eloquent Isocrates to Metaneira.

How far the honor accorded to so many of the hetæræ was due to their talents and how far to their personal fascination, it is difficult to say. In many cases, beauty was their chief distinction. Some are known to have been fair and frail; others were apparently of good character as well as brilliant intellect. A poet of the time speaks of one as

Pure and on virtue's strictest model formed.

It would not be quite safe, however, to measure them by our standards. We may go to the Greeks

for art and literature, but not for morals. Things that we consider criminal, they looked upon as quite natural and innocent. No doubt, too, many things which we consider so harmless as to pass unnoted would have been censured by them as violations of all laws of decorum.

III

THERE was one woman, however, whose individuality was too strong to be altogether merged into that of the man with whom her name is associated. Aspasia stands supreme, after Sappho, as the most brilliant and lettered woman of classic times. The center of a circle so luminous that the ages have not greatly dimmed its radiance, she is likely to live as long as the world cherishes the memory of its greatest men. She was the prototype of the charming and intellectual women who made the literary courts of the Renaissance so famous two thousand years afterward; also of the more familiar ones who shone as leaders of the powerful salons of France a century or two later. Even to-day the aspiring woman who dreams of reviving the social triumphs of her sex recalls the golden days of Athens and wonders what magic drew so many of the great poets, statesmen, and philosophers of the world from the groves of the Academy, the colonnades of the Lyceum, the porticos, and the gymnasia, to pour their treasures

of wit and thought at the feet of the fair Ionian. She may remember, too, that this fascinating woman was not only the high priestess who presided at the birth of society as we know it, but was also the first to assert the right of the wife to be educated, that she might live as the peer and companion of her husband, not as his slave.

Little is known of the facts of her life. She was the first woman who came from Miletus, the pleasure-loving city of roses, and song, and beautiful maidens. Why or how she left her home we are not told, but there is a vague tradition that her parents were dead and that she went away with the famous Thargelia, whose vigorous intellect, together with her wit and beauty, made her a political power in Thessaly and the wife of one of its kings during the Persian wars, though her personality is the faintest of shadows to-day. It is supposed that Aspasia was young, scarcely more than twenty, when she came to Athens, possibly to live with a relative; but this is only a surmise. As a foreigner, whatever her rank, she was outside the pale of good society. The high-born Athenian women looked askance at her, were jealous of her, and said wicked things about her. To be sure, the all-powerful Pericles took her to his home and called her his wife, but she was not a citizen like themselves, and could not lawfully bear his name.

The relation, however, left-handed though it may

have been, was a recognized and permanent one, not less regular perhaps than the morganatic marriages of royal princes to-day, which make a woman a pure and legal wife but never a queen. So rare was the devotion of the grave statesman that it was thought worthy of record, and it was a matter of gossip that he kissed Aspasia when he went out and when he came in—clearly a startling innovation among Athenian husbands. Still more astonishing was the fact that he listened to her counsel and talked with her on State affairs, which, according to their traditions, no reputable woman ought to know anything about. Plutarch tells us that some went so far as to say that he paid court to her on account of her wisdom and political sagacity. Socrates confesses his own indebtedness to her in the use of language, and says that she made many great orators. He thinks it no wonder that Pericles can speak, as he has so excellent a mistress in the art of rhetoric, one who could even write his speeches. He was himself so pleased with a funeral oration she had spoken in his presence, partly from previous thought and partly from the inspiration of the moment, that he learned it by heart. A friend to whom he repeated it was amazed that a woman could compose such a speech, and Socrates added that he might recall many more if he would not tell. This special address was such a masterpiece of wisdom and eloquence that Pericles was asked to

give it every year. As he was quite able to write his own, there was no room for jealousy, even if Aspasia sometimes found in the same field a happy outlet for her fine talent and living enthusiasm.

All this points to a strong probability that the gifted Milesian came to Athens to teach rhetoric and other arts of which she was mistress, as a Frenchwoman might seek her fortune in our own country to-day. But she had not the same immunity from criticism, as the very fact of her talents, and her ability to utilize them, sufficed to put her under a cloud. This, too, might account for the wicked things Aristophanes said of her, but we cannot imagine that Socrates would have advised his friends to send their sons to her for training had they been true. He knew her well, had profited by her instructions, and no one will charge him with gallantry or the disposition to give undue praise. He was essentially a truth-seeker. It is a matter of note, too, that the philosophers had only pleasant words for Aspasia. Her detractors were the satirists and comic poets; but who ever went to either for justice or truth? She was clear-sighted, penetrating, and versed not only in letters but in civil affairs, so it was easy enough to say that she was the power behind the throne in the Samian and Peloponnesian wars. It is certain, however, that Pericles was too wise a statesman to be led into a war by any one against his judgment. It is quite

likely that she had young girls in her house who came to be instructed in the refinements and amenities of life, as poetic maidens had flocked to Sappho from all the isles of the sea a century or so before. This again was a fruitful source of calumny and satire. But it is impossible to read the Attic comedians without a conviction that they measured every one by their own moral standards, which were of the lowest and coarsest. A woman who could discuss philosophy with Socrates and Anaxagoras, art with Phidias, poetry with Sophocles and Euripides, politics and history with Thucydides, if occasion offered, and affairs of the gay world with the young Alcibiades, was not likely to escape the tongue of scandal among people who numbered the silent subjection of women among their most sacred traditions.

Of the beauty of Aspasia we are not sure. We hear of her "honey-colored" or golden hair, of her "small, high-arched foot," of her "silvery voice"; but no one of her time has told us that she was beautiful. There is a bust on which her name is inscribed, but it gives us no clue to the living charm that held great men captive. Did this charm lie in the depth and brilliancy of the veiled eyes, in the tender curve of the half-voluptuous mouth, or in the subtle and variable light of the soul that forever eludes the chilling marble? Another bust, supposed to represent her, has a gentler quality, a finer

distinction, with a faint shadow on the thoughtful face. But the secret of her power did not lie in any rare perfection of form or feature. Perhaps this secret is always difficult to define. Of her fascinating personality we are left in no doubt. With the qualities of *esprit* that belonged to her race, and all the winning graces of her Ionian culture, she combined an intellect of firm and substantial fiber. She was noted for the divining spirit which instinctively recognized the special gifts of her friends; she had, too, the tact and finesse to make the most of them. This is *par excellence* the talent of the social leader.

The salon of Aspasia was the first of which we have any record. The stars of the Attic world gathered there, men who were in the advance-guard of Hellenic thought. Reclining on the many-colored cushions beneath the white pillars, with pictured walls and rare tapestries and exquisite statues of Greek divinities about them, they talked of the new temples; of the last word in art; of the triumph of Sophocles, who had just won the prize of tragedy in the theater of Dionysus; perhaps of Æschylus, who had gone away broken-hearted; of happiness, morals, love, and immortality. The thoughtful woman who sat there radiant in her saffron draperies was not silent. Men marveled at her eager intellect, her grasp of Athenian possibilities; they were charmed with her graceful ways and musical speech. We hear of symposia in other houses, where a Theo-

dota dances, the free wit of Lais flashes, and conversation glides on a low and vulgar level, but no wife or daughter ever appears. There is nothing to indicate that the coterie of Aspasia was otherwise than decorous. Music there was, as the accomplished Ionian played the cithara with skill and taste. Wit there must have been, as no company of Athenians was ever without it. But more was said of its serious side. One of the sons of Pericles, angry because his father would not give him all the money he wished, ridiculed this circle of philosophers and the hours they spent in discussing theories or splitting metaphysical hairs. Their learned disquisitions were not at all to the taste of the pleasure-loving youth.

A few men had the courage to bring their wives, and Aspasia talked to them of their duties and the need of cultivating their minds. Nor did she forget the value of manners and the graces. It is said that she wrote a book on cosmetics; but all her teaching, so far as we know it, went to show that personal charm lay not so much in physical beauty as in the culture of the intellect. The few direct words we have from her lips prove that, with a clear sense of values, she was the true child of an age and race that was singularly devoid of sentiment. If she taught Socrates in some things, she was evidently his pupil in others. This is curiously illustrated in an anecdote related by Æschines.

THE ATHENIAN WOMAN, ASPASIA,

"Tell me," says Aspasia, one day, to the wife of Xenophon, "if your neighbor had finer gold than you have, whether you would prefer her gold or your own."

"I should prefer hers," was the reply.

"Suppose that she had dresses and ornaments of more value than yours; would you prefer your own or hers?"

"Hers, to be sure."

"If she had a better husband than you have, which would you choose?"

The lady blushed and was silent.

The hostess then turned to the husband with like questions.

"I ask you, O Xenophon, whether, if your neighbor had a better horse than yours, you would prefer your own or his."

"Certainly his," was the prompt answer.

"If he had a better farm than yours, which would you wish to own?"

"Beyond doubt, that which is best."

"Suppose that he had a better wife than you have, would you prefer his wife?"

The conversation became embarrassing, and Xenophon was discreetly silent.

The conclusion was obvious. This too logical questioner advised those present to order their lives so that there should be no more admirable woman or more excellent man; then each would always

prefer the other to any one else—a piece of wise counsel that might be profitably considered, in spite of its veiled sophistry. Evidently she did not regard love as a flame that burns without fuel, though in her notions of human perfectibility she makes small account of the quality of the material.

This parlor-talk is a trifle didactic, and lacks the modern elements of popularity, but it is not in the least the talk of such a woman as the enemies of Aspasia pictured her. It was clearly a party of innovation that she led, but it was not a party of corrupt tastes. It was for her opinions that she suffered. Just what connection moral turpitude has with a question of the infallibility of any special form of belief is not apparent, but a charge of impiety cast a darker shadow upon her reputation. In this case it meant little more than a doubt as to the divinity of their quarrelsome and immoral gods, which we should consider highly creditable. She was too rational for a good orthodox pagan. Or it may have meant simply that her house was a rendezvous for the free-thinking philosophers. Here, too, was a woman who took the unheard-of liberty of presiding over her husband's house, making it agreeable for his friends and attractive for himself. She had put dangerous notions into the heads of Athenian wives. Who was this impertinent foreigner, that she should presume to tell them how to please their husbands? How, indeed, could they

please them better than to keep a decorous silence in their apartments, and let their noble lords bring dancing- and talking-women to their banquets, and do otherwise as they liked? Of course she did not respect the gods, and deserved death.

And so she was taken before the judges. The dignified and austere Pericles wept as he pleaded her cause, and his tears won it. She was released, but Anaxagoras, who was under the same charge of impiety because he gave natural causes to apparently supernatural things, as Galileo did centuries later, thought it safe to go away until the fickle Athenians, the French of the classic world, found something else to occupy them.

Without the poetic genius or the passionate intensity of Sappho, Aspasia seems to have had greater breadth and largeness of mind, with the calm judgment and clear reason that belong to a more sophisticated age. She was evidently solid as well as brilliant. That she was eminently tactful and had a great deal of the Greek subtlety counted for much in her success. She had also the perfect comprehension of genius, which is an inspiration, and nearly allied to genius itself. In the vast plans for the glory of Athens, she could hardly have been ignored by the man who adored her and consulted her on the gravest matters. It is not as the Omphale to this Hercules, the Hera to this Zeus, that she has come down to us, save in the jeer of the

satirist, but as the watchful Egeria, who whispered prophetic words of wisdom in the ears of the great Athenian. Who knows how far the world owes to her fine insight and critical taste the superb flowering of art which left an immortal heritage to all the ages?

With the death of Pericles and the dispersion of the distinguished group that surrounded him, Aspasia disappears. There was no place at that time for talents like hers, apart from a great man's protection. It was rumored that she afterward married a rich but obscure citizen, whom she raised by her abilities to a high position in the State, though he did not live long enough to reap much glory from it. The affair savors of the mythical, and perhaps we are safe in giving it little credence. We should like to believe that the woman who had been blessed with the love of a Pericles could never console herself with a lesser man.

Of versatile gifts and endless shades of temperament, teacher, thinker, artist in words and life, critic, musician, friend of women and inspirer of men, but before all things a harmony uniting the grace and sensibility of her sex with a masculine strength of intellect, this gracious Ionian stands with Sappho on the pinnacle of Hellenic culture, each in her own field the highest feminine representative of an esthetic race. Her mission was not an ethical one, and she cannot be so judged; but against the cen-

sure of the enemies and rivals of Pericles, as well as of her own, we have abundant evidence that, in her virtues, as in her talents, she surpassed the standards of her class and time. It was not of a light-minded woman that Pericles said when dying: "Athens intrusted her greatness and Aspasia her happiness to me."

IV

It is not unlikely that Aspasia had much to do with modifying the low views held regarding her sex, and with promoting the discussions of the philosophers who came after her. Socrates had her example before him when he said that the talent of women was not at all inferior to that of men, though they lacked bodily vigor and strength. Plato accorded them the same talents as men, though less in degree; indeed, he went so far as to advise a common training, as in Sparta, on the ground that gifts are diffused equally between the sexes. Aristotle is less generous to women. He accords them weaker reasoning powers, and insists upon their silent and passive obedience; but he preaches to men justice, appreciation, and the sanctity of marriage. On the whole, from our point of view, he paints a more agreeable society than Plato, in spite of the greater equality taught by the latter. The satirists were not slow to take up the matter, and

Aristophanes drew a doleful picture of women donning male attire and going to the agora to reform the State, while their husbands were left to look after things at home. They start out with the idea of making everybody happy. There are to be no rich, no poor, no thefts, no slanders, no miseries. Praxagora pleads her cause with all the force and energy of the modern woman who seeks political rights, but she is less poised and goes further. The State is to be intrusted to women. They are successful managers at home and have shown their superior gifts of administration. In any case, they could not do worse than men have done. They end, however, by voting unlimited communism and outdoing the demagogues. This "woman's congress" was not an unqualified success; indeed, it was a disgraceful failure, as it was intended to be: but it cast into like ridicule the philosophers and the "strong-minded" women, among whom Aspasia was doubtless included, as she had convictions, though the conversations in her salon probably marked the limit of their public expression. Who the others were we do not know, but it is clear that there was an undercurrent of "divine discontent" among the women of two thousand years ago. History repeats itself, and the "woman question" is not a new one, though we have made immense strides in the rational consideration of it.

It is sufficiently clear that the harmonious devel-

opment of the Hellenic women was in proportion to their liberty of action, and the most fault was found with them where they had the least freedom. If the spirited women of Sparta had been born in conservative Athens the world might never have known that they were capable of so much strength and heroism. The sparks hidden in their cramped souls would have gone out for lack of air. If the secluded Athenian woman had been born in Sparta, who can say that she might not have been as clever as Gorgo, as brave as Cratesiclea, and as independent as Lampito? It is possible that the genius of Sappho would have been smothered in the social atmosphere of either place. There is ample evidence that the intellects of Greek women expanded fast enough when the conventional pressure was even partly removed. Nor is it true that they retrograded in morals as they advanced in intelligence. Never did the Attic poets point their shafts of satire so sharply as against the follies of the ignorant women who were limited mainly to their apartments, far from the possible corruption of knowledge or the visible temptation to sin. The tone of morality was purer even among the free Spartan women, who had more education but less surveillance.

There is nothing more vitally significant in the lives of Athenian wives than the extent to which they saw themselves set aside and neglected for foreigners of more brilliant accomplishments, be-

cause they could not or would not break the bonds of fashionable tradition, which decreed for them silence and seclusion. In primitive conditions where no one is educated, the virtues may suffice for companionship; but at a certain stage of civilization, when men read and think, the woman who does not is sure to be practically excluded from his society, though she may still be his housekeeper or the toy of an idle hour. Athens in the height of her glory presented the strange anomaly of a respectable illiterate class from which the mothers of future citizens must be taken, and an educated class without civil rights who could not marry Athenians. If the latter had any domestic ties at all, they were forced into morganatic relations. This did not of necessity imply laxity of character; indeed, it was not always condemned by Athenian moralists. But no class could long maintain any high standard of virtue under such conditions. They opened the way for endless license. The gay and dissolute women from the East flocked to the Hellenic cities, and in the reckless corruption that followed, wise men trace a potent cause of Athenian decline.

REVOLT OF THE ROMAN WOMEN

REVOLT OF THE ROMAN WOMEN

• The Woman Question an Old One •
• Character and Virtues of Early Roman Women •
• Instances of Heroism •
• Their Disabilities •
• Primitive Roman Morals •
• Servitude of Wives • Husband Poisoning •
• The Oppian Law • The Revolt •
• Crabbed Cato • Change in Laws •
• Second Revolt • Hortensia •
• The Marriage Question •
• Intellectual Movement • Cornelia •

REVOLT OF THE ROMAN WOMEN

I

NOT long ago an able and eloquent man, well known in political life, made the astonishing statement that from the time Eve left paradise to the advent of the modern champion of her sex, "woman was apparently content with her subordination." It is not proposed here to enter at all into the present phases of a subject that has been sufficiently discussed, or to define the precise point where those who belong to what our noble friend is pleased to call the "inferior and defective half of the race" may with reason protest; but as a matter of fact there has never been so prolonged and serious a commotion on the much-talked-of "woman question" as in the Rome of two thousand years ago; and perhaps no recorded moment in the history of women has been of such far-

reaching importance as those struggles for justice and recognition. With possibly one exception, the points at issue were not quite the same as in the middle of the nineteenth century, but they involved many of the same privileges. The contention concerned not only a woman's right to a voice in the control of her own property, but to some consideration in marriage, and a measure of personal liberty. The laws that grew out of it, in the slow process of years, have served as a basis for the codes that have more or less governed civilized countries ever since, and though these have often deviated far from the liberal standard of the statutes of Justinian, they have never fallen permanently to the old level. A certain marked resemblance in the character and growth of the Roman and the Anglo-Saxon woman gives us a special interest in these controversies and their practical outcome.

That the Roman woman had ample cause for protest could hardly be questioned to-day, even by the most determined advocate of the old order of things. The contrast between the character and ability so conspicuously shown by what she did at various times for her country, and the humiliation of her position, was too great. In the qualities of temperament and imagination which, if given free scope, make poets and artists, the Grecian women surpassed her. But the very traits of sensibility that constituted their fascination rendered them an easy

prey to the rule of a master. Their chief legacy to posterity was an esthetic one. The talent of the Roman woman was of another sort. She was of a masterful type, striking in physique, strong in purpose, clear in judgment, with the pride and dignity of a race born to rule the world. It was through her practical wisdom in directing affairs, together with her courage, foresight, and indomitable will, that she gained in the end a degree of independence which perhaps we should hardly call by that name to-day, but which was relative freedom and left a permanent trace on after ages.

Of the heroism, political sagacity, and moral value of the Roman women we have abundant evidence, but it is difficult to catch the outline of faces seen in half-lights, or of characters revealed only on one side. They did not write of themselves, or of each other, as women of later and, to some extent, even of earlier ages have done. There was no Sappho to sing of their joys and sorrows, or give us a clue to what they thought and felt. Men who wrote freely of affairs reserved small space for them, so we know little of their personal life, except through passing glimpses in a few private letters, and the cynical if not malicious pictures of satirists. The Romans were not a creative or imaginative race, and have left us none of the great ideals of womanhood that grace the pages of the Greek poets. No Helen with her divine beauty and charm, no Antigone with

her strength of sacrifice, no Andromache with her tender and winning personality, shows us the manner of woman that lived in the minds and hearts of men. But if the delicacy of shading which reveals fine complexities of character is wanting, we have a few records of brave deeds and individual virtues that are likely to stand as long as the world to show us the quality that made them possible. Alcestis going serenely to her death for her weak and selfish lord is not more heroic than Lucretia, who saved the falling liberties of Rome by plunging the dagger into her heart and calling upon her husband to avenge her outraged honor. Iphigenia is not a more touching figure than the innocent Virginia, sacrificed, not to the gods, but to the brutality of wicked men.

From Tanaquil, whose ambition and prophetic insight led the first Tarquin to leave his simple Etruscan home for a Roman throne, to the wise Livia, who shared the power and glory of Augustus for more than half a century, women came to the front in many a public crisis. Men gave them no real liberty, but they did give them monuments. These are mostly gone now, but the records of them are left. Standing by the Capitol to-day and looking across the crumbling temples, columns, statues, and arches which have preserved for us the memories of Old Rome, one is forcibly reminded of the important part played by women in laying the

foundations of the long faded glory that still lends these ruins so melancholy and picturesque a charm. The strength and courage of the Roman woman were immortalized in the equestrian statue of the daring Clœlia, in the Via Sacra, that stretches before us. Not far off was the temple of Juno, where the festivals of the Matronalia were held for centuries, in honor of the women who settled the contest between the Romans and the Sabines. Beyond the walls on the way to the Alban hills was the temple of Fortuna Muliebris, which bore lasting testimony to the wisdom and patriotism of Valeria, its first priestess; also to the gentle but powerful influence of Volumnia and Virgilia, who, led by her counsels, saved the city from a too ambitious son and brother. It was the spirit of the divine Egeria that whispered prophetic words of warning to Numa in the secluded grotto beyond the Aventine. The Sibyls held the secrets of divination, and in the vaults at our feet they deposited the books that foretold the destinies of Rome.

There still stands the little temple where the white-robed Vestals watched over the holy Palladium and took care that the sacred fire should never go out for eleven hundred years. Men on the heights of power bowed to the authority of these consecrated women, who occupied everywhere the place of honor, settled disputes, testified without oath, and brought pardon even to a criminal who

met them by accident. All this, whether fact or legend, was a tacit recognition of the judgment, purity, and insight of woman. It might not be desirable to give her any rights civil or social, but, as a sort of compensation, men quieted their consciences and gave themselves a comfortable feeling of being just, if indeed they ever had any doubt on that point, by offering her more or less theoretical honor, and a shadowy place near the gods, where they could avail themselves of her wisdom without any personal inconvenience. In addition to this, they built her a little temple dedicated to the goddess Viriplaca, Appeaser of Husbands, where she could solace her bruised heart by confiding her wrongs and sorrows to this conciliatory divinity, who seems to have been useful mainly as a repository of tears, though her office was to compose differences. It has long since vanished, but it speaks volumes for the helplessness of women that it ever existed at all. It told the tragedy of many a Roman matron's life.

II

WE have seen a little of what these women were and what they did. What they suffered can be better gathered from a glance at their position and the share they had in the liberties they had done so much to foster and save. Of freedom the Roman woman of earlier times had none at all, though she

was not secluded like her Athenian sisters, and her place in the family was a better one. Her character was formed, like that of our Puritan mothers, in times of toil and danger, when she worked side by side with men for a common end, and, in both, their strength of purpose and spirit of heroic sacrifice lasted long after the hard conditions of primitive life had passed. Besides, the natural talent for administration which shone through all her limitations was to a certain degree recognized by her husband, and she was often his counselor, as well as the instructor of his children, even beyond the seven years prescribed. But all this did not suffice to give her any liberty of thought or action, and she was to all intents and purposes a slave, subject to the caprices of a master who might choose to be kind, though, in case he did not, she had no protection either in law or custom; and we all know how soon the consciousness of absolute power warps the sensibilities of even the gentlest. "Created to please and obey," says Gibbon, "she was never supposed to have reached the age of reason and experience." She was under guardianship all her life, first of her father, then of her husband, and, at his death, of her nearest male relative. For centuries she had no right to her own property, no control of her own person, no choice in marriage, no recourse against cruelty and oppression. "The husband has absolute power over the wife," said the stern old

Cato; "it is for him to condemn and punish her for any shameful act, such as taking wine or violating the moral law." To show what was possible in the way of surveillance, we are told that he was in the habit of kissing her, when he came home, to satisfy himself that she had not been drinking. One man who found his wife sipping wine beat her to death; another dismissed his weaker half because she was seen on the street without a veil; and a daring woman was sent away because she went to the circus without leave. Any man could spend his wife's money, beat her, sell her, give her to some one else when he was tired of her, even put her to death, "acting as accuser, judge, jury, and executioner." In the last case it was better to call her friends into council, perhaps even necessary, if they were powerful enough to ask for an explanation; but "a man can do as he likes with his own" was sufficient to cover any injustice or any crime. Even in the last days of the Republic, when the laws were greatly modified, the younger Cato, a man noted for his stoical virtues, gave his wife to his friend Hortensius, and after his death took her back—with a dowry added. What she thought of the matter signified little. It does not appear that she was even consulted. The family was the unit, and the man was the family.

It is fair to say that it was not women alone who suffered from this peculiar phase of Roman society, as men had little more freedom so long as their

fathers lived; but it fell much more severely on those who were, in the nature of things, more helpless. The best they could hope for was a change of masters, which might be for the worse; and who was to protect them from their irresponsible protectors, even with all the safeguards supposed to be provided by law? For this evidently put them where Terence did the philosophers, along with horses and hunting-dogs, that were owned but not necessarily considered.

It is said, in praise of the morals of Rome during its first centuries, that there was not a divorce for five hundred years. The exact nature of this merit is seen more clearly when we find that a woman could not apply for a divorce, or expect a redress of any wrong, whatever might befall her; while a man simply sent away his wife, if she did not please him, without any formalities, and with slight, if any, penalties. This did not release her from perpetual servitude, though he was free to follow his inclinations, amenable to no law and no obligation. It is true, however, that Roman matrons prided themselves on their dignity. A certain respect was exacted for them, and familiarity in their presence was a punishable offense. They took every occasion also to show appreciation of their defenders. They mourned a year for Brutus, who died in avenging Lucretia's honor, and did the same later for his upright colleague.

REVOLT OF THE ROMAN WOMEN

Many years afterward there was a temple of patrician chastity in which women assembled for sacred rites, but they found as many causes for contention as some of our societies do to-day. One noble matron lost caste by marrying a plebeian, and was excluded. She protested in vain. Her birth, her spotless fame, her devotion to her husband, counted for nothing so long as that husband did not belong to the elect. There was no lack of spirited words, but the matter did not end here. This slighted Virginia started another association on her own ground, set apart a chapel in her house, and erected an altar to plebeian chastity. The standards were to be much higher. She called together the plebeian ladies, and proposed that they emulate one another in virtue, as men did in valor. No woman of doubtful honor or twice married was admitted. Unfortunately, this organization in time opened its doors too wide, and shared the fate of many others.

On another occasion Quinta Claudia, one of the leading matrons of Rome, played so conspicuous a part that she won immortality and a statue of brass. She was at the head of a delegation appointed to meet the Idæan Mother, who was expected at Terracina, and whose coming was of great importance, as various strange happenings showed conclusively that Juno was angry and needed propitiation. It was decided that the most virtuous man in the State should accompany the matrons, but it was

only after much tribulation that the Senate found one fit to be intrusted with the office, and this was a young Scipio. Unfortunately, the vessel containing the image went aground, and the augurs declared that only a woman of spotless character could dislodge it. Quinta Claudia was equal to the occasion. She seized the oar, with a prayer to Cybele; the boat moved from its place as if by magic, and was safely carried to its destination. The lady's fair fame, which had been a little clouded, was forever established by a direct interposition of the gods. The matrons acquitted themselves with honor and, it is to be hoped, to the satisfaction of the goddess, who was duly installed in her temple.

All this goes to prove that the women of twenty centuries ago often combined in the interest of religion and morals, and were quite capable of managing public as well as private affairs; also that great value was attached to the austere virtues. The wise Cato is said to have erased the name of a Roman from the list of senators because he kissed his wife in the presence of his daughters—a worse penalty than the old Blue Laws imposed on the man who kissed his wife on Sunday. It is a pity that this crabbed censor, of many theoretical virtues and a few practical ones set in thorns, failed to appreciate the dignity and decorum of the Roman matron. It was this same rigid Cato who, in spite of the fact that he "preferred a good husband to a

great senator," was so inconsistently shocked that a Roman lady should presume to be a companion to her noble lord. He looked upon a wife as a necessary evil, and declared that " the lives of men would be less godless if they were quit of women."

There was no question of love or inclination in arranging a Roman marriage. It was simply a contract between citizens, a State affair intended solely to perpetuate the race in its purity, and to preserve family and religious traditions. In its best form it was for centuries restricted to patricians, who alone were privileged to take the mystic bread together. This constituted a religious marriage, and only this could give their children pure descent or admission to the highest functions of the State. There were two lower grades of civil marriage, but each gave a man supreme control of his wife, without the dignity of consecration. Whatever cruelty and suffering might result from this one-sided relation,—and the possibilities were enormous,—a woman was expected to love the husband chosen by her friends, for himself alone, and a bridegroom's presents were limited by custom, so that she might not be tempted to love him for what he could give her. She must go out to meet him, submit patiently to any indignities he might offer, and mourn him in due form when he died. *Her* death he was not required to mourn at all. His infidelities she must never see, as any complaint was likely to meet with

a dismissal, and she knew that even her father would say it served her right for interfering in any way with a man's privilege of doing as he liked.

That a woman ever did love her husband under such conditions proves that her heart was as tender as her capacity for self-sacrifice was great; also that men were by no means as wicked or tyrannical as they had the power to be. We know that liberty is not always insured by an edict, nor does cruelty or injustice invariably follow the lack of a decree against it. There are many notable instances of the devotion of Roman women and the affection of Roman men; indeed, it is quite certain that there was a great deal of happy domestic life. Men naturally accepted the traditions of a society into which they had been born, and women did not question them unless their burdens became intolerable, and even these they considered a part of their destiny, as good women had done before them—and have done since. But power is a dangerous gift for the best of us, and without some strong safeguard, moral or legal, brute force inevitably asserts itself over helplessness. In modern times a sentiment grown into a tradition has done much toward tempering the condition of women even under arbitrary rule, though their own increased intelligence has done more. Sentiment, however, was not a quality of the average Roman character. Men were masterful and passionate, eager of power and impatient

of contradiction. To offset this, they often had a strong family feeling and a certain sense of justice, besides a natural love of peace in the home; but this did not suffice to curb the violence and cruelty of the wicked, nor to render the position of the high-spirited wife a possible one. The stuff out of which Lucretias and Cornelias are made is not the stuff to bear habitual oppression silently, beyond a certain point.

It was doubtless this oppression that was responsible for a startling epidemic of husband-poisoning in the fourth century before Christ. The women who prepared the drugs were betrayed by a maid, and one hundred and seventy matrons—some of them patricians—were found guilty. The leaders were forced to take their own poisons, and died with the calmness of Stoics. Two hundred years afterward there was another epidemic of the same sort, and many eminent men paid the penalty of their cruelties with their lives. This mode of redressing wrongs became too common to be passed to the account of individual crime. It was the protest of helpless ignorance that had found no other weapon.

About this time, however, the Roman matrons took a more civilized and rational method of asserting their rights. It was an innovation to claim any, but they were too proud to accept the hopeless vassalage of the Athenian woman. Indignant at

the inferiority of their condition, without recourse or refuge against cruelty and injustice, hampered by needless and petty restrictions, they rebelled at last.

III

ONE sees little clearly through the mists of two thousand years, and we know few details of what seems to have been the first concerted revolt on the part of women. The visible cause was a trivial one, but it was the proverbial last drop, and served at least to bring dismay into the councils of men, and afterward, possibly, reflection. The Roman woman was patriotic and quite ready, at need, to give all and ask nothing. When money was required to carry on the Punic wars, she poured out her jewels and personal treasures with lavish generosity; nor did she murmur when the Oppian law decreed that she must no longer wear purple or many-colored robes, that her gold ornaments must weigh no more than half an ounce, and that she must walk if she went out, as the use of a carriage in the city was a forbidden luxury. These were small privileges, but they were about all she had, and when the crisis was past, she asked a repeal of the decree. She met the usual rebuff of those who seek to regain a lost point. Men saw in such a request only an "irruption of female emancipators," dangerous alike to religion and the State. Cato, the austere, refused a petition

which he regarded as a subversion of order and a rebellion against lawful masters. He said that the claim of women to any rights or any voice in public affairs was a proof that men had lost their majesty as well as their authority; such a thing could not have happened if each one had kept his own wife in proper subjection. "Our privileges," he continues, "overpowered at home by female contumacy, are, even here in the forum, spurned and trodden under foot"; indeed, he begins to fear that "the whole race of males may be utterly destroyed by a conspiracy of women." He rails at the matrons, who throng the forum, for "running into public and addressing other women's husbands." It "does not concern them what laws are passed or repealed." He bewails the "good old days" when women were forced to obey their fathers, brothers, or husbands. "Now they are so lost to a sense of decency as to ask favors of other men." "Women," he says, "bear law with impatience." They long for liberty, which is not good for them. With all the old restrictions, it is difficult to keep them within bounds. "The moment they have arrived at equality they will be our superiors"—a dangerous admission surely. He calls the affair a sedition, an insurrection, a secession of women.

But the matrons had some able defenders. Lucius Valerius, who had asked the repeal of this obnoxious law, spoke for them. He objects to call-

ing a natural request by such hard names, and quotes from antiquity to prove that it is not a new thing for Roman matrons to come out in public, as they have often done so in the interest of the State, and "always to its advantage." He recalls the various times when they saved Rome, and refers to the generosity with which they invariably responded to a call for help. No one objected when they appeared for the general good; why should they be censured when they asked a favor for themselves? In reply to the accusation of extravagance, he says: "When you wear purple on your own robe, why will you not permit your wife a purple mantle?" . . . "Will you spend more on your horse than on your wife?" Then he asks why women who have always been noted for modesty should lose it now through the repeal of a law that has not been in existence more than twenty years. One is tempted to quote at length from these speeches, because they show us how the Romans discussed certain questions that are familiar to-day. To be sure, it was only a woman's privilege of dressing as she chose that they were considering, but it really involved her right to ask anything which her lord and master did not freely accord. We hear practically the same arguments, the same fears, the same special pleadings on both sides, at each new step in the social advancement of women.

The Roman matrons, however, were not discour-

aged by criticism. They flocked to the forum in greater numbers than ever. Women came in from the towns and villages to aid them. The senators were so astounded at their audacity that they solemnly implored the gods to reveal the nature of the omen. They stigmatized the leaders as "androgynes" or "he-women," a term of contempt so freely applied in this country, less than fifty years ago, to those who bravely presented the claims of their sex to larger consideration, and who, silver-haired and venerable, are so widely honored to-day. We do not hear that there were any congresses or conventions, but these Roman ladies held meetings, went into the streets for votes, and appealed to nobles, officials, and strangers alike. They sought the tribunes in their houses, and used all their arts of persuasion. There were fair-minded men then as now, and the spirited rebels won their cause, though Cato revenged himself for his defeat by imposing a heavy tax on the dress, ornaments, and carriages of women. It is said that they put on their gay robes and jewels at once, and celebrated their victory by dancing in the legislative halls.

Not far from this time, possibly a little before, a dowry was set apart for women. But there was a growing jealousy of their increasing independence, and, a few years later, it was proposed to take away from them the right of inheritance. It was feared that too much property might fall into their hands,

as had been the case in Sparta; also, that their taste for elegant living might lead to degeneracy of manners and morals. The irrepressible Cato again came to the front and declaimed against the arrogance and tyranny of rich women. After bringing their husbands a large dowry, he said, they even had the presumption to retain some of their own money for themselves and ask payment if they lent it to their masters! Men could not be expected to tolerate such insufferable insolence on the part of their "reserved slaves." And so the decree was passed. But it was more honored in the breach than in the observance, and became a dead letter, as men themselves thought it unjust.

How far the gradual change in the laws was due to the efforts of women and how far to the justice of men, it is not easy to determine; but the astonished attitude of the latter when they felt that their time-honored supremacy was in peril shows better than anything else the real significance of the movement which was precipitated by so slight a cause. It is quite safe to say that without an emphatic protest there would have been no thought of justice. Traditions are only broken from the inside where they press heavily. In this case it was a daring and unheard-of thing to run against the current of centuries of passive submission; but "it is the first step that costs." When the right of being heard had been once asserted, grave statesmen and

jurists took up the matter and solved it as best they could, with an evident desire to be just and kind, as they understood it. It could hardly be expected that half of the human family would voluntarily relinquish the absolute ownership of the other half, or even believe it to be good for the other half that they should do so. Men are not so constituted. The institutions and customs that had come to them from their fathers they felt bound to pass on, as far as possible, intact. Besides, all vital changes must be slow, unless they are to be chaotic. But the leaven of a new intelligence worked surely, if not swiftly.

The masses of the Roman women never passed out of a condition which we should call subjection, though they did secure at last the use of their own fortunes, relative freedom in the marriage contract, and a certain protection against money-hunting and spendthrift husbands. In the reign of Augustus the wife was given a guaranty for her own property, and the husband was forbidden to alienate the dowry. The mother was in a measure freed from oppressive guardianship, which later ceased altogether. Under Hadrian she was permitted to make a will without consulting any one, also to inherit from her sons. In many regards the Romans after the Antonines were more just to women than are most of the civilized nations of to-day. But these changes were the work of centuries, and it is pos-

sible here to touch only upon a few essential points.

There was a second revolt more than a hundred years after the first, when the triumvirs levied on the rich women of Rome a tax which compelled many of them to sacrifice their jewels. They appealed to Octavia to use her influence, also to the able mother of Antony, both of whom favored them; but his wife, the Fulvia of unpleasant fame, treated them with intolerable rudeness. Again they thronged the forum; but they had made vast strides in intelligence, and this time the eloquent daughter of a famous orator was chosen to plead for them. It was no longer a simple matter of personal injustice, but also a moral question upon which thoughtful women had distinct opinions and the ability to express them. Hortensia spoke for peace. "Do not ask us," she says, "to contribute to the fratricidal war that is rending the Republic." Her appeal for justice recalls a plea so often heard to-day, in a form that is but slightly altered. "Why should we pay taxes," she says, "when we have no part in the honors, the commands, the statecraft, for which you contend against each other with such harmful results? . . . When have taxes ever been imposed on women?" Quintilian refers to this address of a brilliant matron as worthy to be read for its excellence, and "not merely as an honor to her sex."

These spirited and high-born women were sent

home, as the others had been, but the people again came to their aid, and it was found best to limit the tax to a few who could bear the burden easily.

IV

BUT the most serious conflict was on the marriage question. The attitude of the Roman man has been already touched upon—an attitude as old as the world. In theory, a woman might be as chaste as Lucretia, as wise as Minerva, as near to divinity as the Vestals; in fact, she was only the servant of men's interests or passions, and when she ceased to be a willing or at least a passive one, the trouble began. So long as marriage gave a man added dignity and somebody to rule over, with no special obligations that were likely to be inconvenient, or that could not be shaken off at will, things went smoothly enough on his side. But when he had to deal with a being who demanded some consideration, perhaps some sacrifice, it was another affair. His privileges were seriously curtailed. If he married wealth, it was quite possible for the owner to become imperious and exacting, as it was not so easy to put away a wife when one must return her fortune. "I have sold my authority for the dowry I have accepted," says Plautus. As to marrying from inclination, a man had little more freedom of action than a maiden, while his father lived. If he was

a patrician he must marry within a limited class, much as he might like to go outside of it; and so long as this law continued to exist, the penalty for violating it was too severe to be braved. Besides, there were cares and restrictions in the marriage relation for pleasure-loving men. Wives without fortunes might be less exacting, but they were more expensive, which was worse, since men preferred to spend their money on themselves—a state of affairs toward which a certain class is rapidly drifting to-day, if it is not there already. Statesmen began to be alarmed. "If it were possible to do without wives, great cares would be spared us," said Metellus in an address to the Senate; "but since nature has decreed that we cannot live without a wife, nor comfortably with one, let us bear the burden manfully, and look to the perpetuity of the State rather than to our own satisfaction." It never seems to have occurred to these consistent descendants of Adam to consider the burdens of the woman at all. On her side, a rich woman hesitated to take a master, if she was independent enough to have any choice, which was rare, and without a dowry she was quite sure of finding a capricious one, who would not scruple to neglect her. Some guaranties she must have, and these men did not like to give. So men and women alike combined against the existing order of things, men for the right to do precisely as they pleased, women for the

right of choice in husbands and of breaking chains when they became intolerable.

It has often been stated, by moralists over-anxious to make out a case, that this aversion to marriage, on the part of men, was due to the laxity of women. Of this I do not find any evidence. It was due in part to the restrictions already mentioned, and in part to the increasing luxury which, added to the long habit of absolute power, led to impatience of any domestic obligations, and a riot of the senses, as it has always done, before and since. Besides, there were the brilliant Oriental women who began to flock to Rome, bringing with them Hellenic tastes, with subtle fascinations that stole away the hearts of men and threatened a state of affairs similar to that which existed in Athens. This the spirited Roman women could not tolerate. To be thrust by strangers into a secondary place was not to be thought of by these proud patricians, who refused to put themselves in a position where such neglect was possible. They began to realize that the old virtues did not suffice to hold men's wandering fancies. It was very well to carve on a woman's tombstone, as a last word of praise, an epitaph like this: "Gentle in words, graceful in manner; she loved her husband devotedly; she kept her house, she spun wool." But what availed it when this husband left her to the companionship of her duties and her virtues, while he gave what he called his affections to those who had fewer

virtues and more accomplishments? It was not laxity of morals, but lack of intelligence and culture, that stood in the way of the Roman woman in the days when Greek literature, Greek art, and Greek refinement first came into fashion. That she protested against traditions which made it superfluous, if not dangerous, to cultivate her intellect, may fairly be assumed. But she had a powerful ally. On this point the Romans showed far more wisdom than the Greeks. When they saw their own daughters set aside for these fascinating rivals, they began to educate them.

Just when the movement toward things of the intellect began among Roman women, it is difficult to determine with any exactness. It was after the Eastern wars and probably about the time of the first revolt. It had not been long since men began to catch the spirit of Greek culture. For five hundred years after the foundation of Rome there was not a book written, nor even a poem or a song. As soon as men began to study and think, women were disposed to do the same thing. If they could not well fight, they had the ability to learn. The pretensions of sex were not emphasized, but individual attainment was not without recognition. We begin to find women who were noted not only for strength, wisdom, and administrative ability, but for literary taste and culture. The austere virtues of Cornelia, who lived in the second century before our

era, are among the familiar facts of history. She has been often quoted as the supreme exemplar of the crowning grace of womanhood, and we know that she was honored at her death with a statue dedicated to the "Mother of the Gracchi." Of her refinement, knowledge, and love of letters, less has been said, but it was largely because of these that she was able to train great sons. Cicero, who pronounced her letters among the purest specimens of style extant in his time, dwells upon the fact that these sons were educated in the purity and elegance of their mother's language. Quintilian says that the "mother, whose learned letters have come down to posterity, contributed greatly to their eloquence." Her passion for Hellenic poetry and philosophy was well known. It was a part of her heritage from her father, the illustrious Scipio, a great general with the tastes and abilities of a great scholar. Cato found fault with him and said he must be brought down to republican equality. This fiery radical and economist, who hated luxury, reviled women who had opinions, preached morals which he did not possess, whipped his slaves if anything was lost or spoiled, sold them at auction when they were sick or old, and put them to death if they did not please him,—this censor who was so generally disagreeable that when he died a wit said, "Pluto dreaded to receive him because he was always ready to bite,"—could not tolerate a man of refinement who shaved

every day and patronized Greek learning, whatever glory he might reflect on his country. We do not know what he said about Cornelia, but it may be imagined, as he was the determined adversary of feminine culture.

The woman who brought up the Gracchi, and was so proud to show these "jewels" to her finery-loving friends, was no pedant, but in her last desolate years, when she was left alone with all her tragical memories, her hospitable home at Misenum was a center for learned Greeks and men of intellectual distinction. She was a woman of great force of character, and the composure with which she bore her misfortune, and talked of the deeds and sufferings of her sons, was sometimes thought to show a lack of sensibility. Plutarch, with his usual insight and cordial appreciation of women, said it indicated rather a lack of understanding on the part of the critics that they did not know the value of "a noble mind and liberal education" in supporting their possessor under sorrow and calamity. This heroic mother of heroic sons, who "refused Ptolemy and a crown," was the first Roman matron of distinguished intellectual attainments of whom we have any definite knowledge, and the finest feminine representative of her age. Within the next century there were many others more or less prominent in social life.

With the advance in education many of the ob-

stacles to marriage were removed, and the dangers that had lurked in the ignorance of Athenian women were averted. But the problem never ceased to be a troublesome one. With the increase of wealth men grew more self-indulgent, and less inclined to incur obligations of any sort. The despair of Augustus had its humorous side. He exhausted his wit in devising means to induce men to marry. In vain he gave honor and freedom to the married, exacted fresh penalties from bachelors, who were forbidden to receive bequests, and made laws against immorality. Fathers had precedence everywhere—in affairs, at the theater, in public offices. "For less rewards than these thousands would lose their lives," he said. "Can they not tempt a Roman citizen to marry a wife?" Some who wished the privileges without the troubles compromised the matter by entering into formal contracts with children four or five years of age. Others took a wife for a year to comply with the law, and then dismissed her.

It is not the purpose here to pursue in detail this phase of Roman life, nor to trace the slow and obscure changes in the laws that followed the revolt of women from ages of oppression. This brief outline suffices to show that the women of two thousand years ago were far from accepting abject subservience without a protest; that they had the spirit and intelligence to combine in their own defense; that

they won the privilege of virtually the same education which was given to men, and so much consideration that the Romans of the third and fourth centuries were more just to a woman's rights of property than were the Americans in the first half of the nineteenth. Happily better counsels prevail here to-day; but it is a commentary on the instability of human affairs that, even on the higher plane of morals and intelligence from which we started, the battle had to be fought over again.

THE "NEW WOMAN" OF OLD ROME

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THE "NEW WOMAN" OF OLD ROME

I

A GREAT deal has been said of the Roman women of imperial days. Much of it is not to their credit, but the bad are apt to be more striking figures than the good, and to overshadow them in a long perspective. The world likes to put its saints in a special category, and worship them from afar. It seems fitting that they should sing hymns and pray for suffering humanity in a cloistral seclusion, but they are rarely quoted as representative of their age. On the other hand, it holds up its brilliant or high-placed sinners as examples to be shunned; but it talks about them and lifts them on a pedestal to show us how wicked they are, until in the course of centuries they come to be looked upon as representing the women of their time, when in fact they represent only its worst type. Two thou-

sand years hence, no doubt a few conspicuous women noted to-day for brilliancy, beauty, or special gifts, rather than for flawless character, will stand out in more luminous colors than the great mass of refined and cultivated ones who have dazzled their generation less and graced it more. Possibly they may even furnish a text on which some strenuous moralist of the fortieth century will expatiate, with illustrations from our big-lettered journals, to show the corruption of our manners and the dangers that lie in the cultivation of feminine intellect! And yet we know that the moral standards of the world were never so high as in these days when the influence of women in the mass is greater than ever before.

written in 1901

Of the colossal wickedness of imperial Rome there is no question, and sinners were not rare among women. But the Julias and Messalinas did not represent the average tone of Roman society, any more than the too numerous examples of vice in high places reflect the average morality of the great cities of to-day. A careful study of those times reveals, beneath the surface of the life most conspicuous for its brilliancy and its vices, a type of womanhood as strong and heroic as we find in primitive days, with the added wisdom, culture, and helpfulness which had grown out of the freer development of the intellect.

The Romans of the last century of the Republic

had, like ourselves, their corrupt politicians, their struggles for office, their demagogues, and their wars for liberty—meaning their own. They had also their plutocrats, their parvenus, their love of glittering splendor, their rage for culture, their patrons of art, who brought the masterpieces over the seas, and, not least, their "new woman." I use the phrase in its best, not in its extreme, sense; the exaggeration of a good type is always a bad one. This last product of a growing civilization did not claim political rights or industrial privileges, as we understand them; she did not write books of any note, or seek university honors in cap and gown; nor did she combine in world-wide organizations to better herself and other people: but she did a great many things in similar directions, that were quite as new and vital to the world in which she lived. If she did not say much about the higher education, she was beginning to have a good deal of the best that was known. The example of the learned as well as virtuous and womanly Cornelia had not been lost. It was no longer sufficient to say, in the language of an old epitaph, that a woman was "good and beautiful, an indefatigable spinner, pious, reserved, chaste, and a good housekeeper." The conservative matron still prided herself on these qualities which had so long constituted the glory of her sex, but it was decreed that she must have something more. In the new order of things, she shared in the culti-

vation of the intellect, and ignorance had lost its place among the virtues. Girls were educated with boys, read the same books, and studied the same subjects. To keep pace with the age, a woman must be familiar with Greek as well as Roman letters. She must also know how to sing and dance. "This helps them to find husbands," says Statius, who had little money to give his daughter, but felt sure she could marry well because she was a "cultivated woman." The line of co-education, however, was drawn at singing and dancing, where it began with us. In earlier times these accomplishments and the knowledge of various languages were among the attractions of the courtezan.

The new Roman woman did not live her life apart from men, any more than did the women of the old régime. Probably it never occurred to her that it would be either pleasant or desirable to do so. She simply wished to be considered as a peer and companion. Nor does she seem to have been aggressive in public affairs. If she busied herself with them, it was in counsels with men, and her influence was mainly an indirect one. She had freed herself from some of the worst features of an irresponsible masculine rule, but she was still in leading-strings, though the strings were longer and gave her a little more freedom of movement. There were many women of the newer generation who added to the simple virtues of the home the larger

interests of the citizen, and conspicuous political wisdom as well as great intelligence. We first hear of them in councils of State through the letters of Cicero, who gossiped so agreeably, and at times so critically, of passing events. He speaks of the companions and advisers he found with Brutus at Antium, among whom were the heroic Portia, wife of the misguided leader, his sister Tertulla, and his mother Servilia, a woman of high attainments and masterful character, who had been the lifelong friend of Cæsar. The influence of this able and accomplished matron over the great statesman did not wane with her beauty, as it lasted to the end, though she could not save him from the fatal blow dealt by her son. The tongue of scandal did not spare her, but at this time she was old and past the suspicion of seeking to gain her purposes by the arts of coquetry. Cicero feared her power, as her force of intellect and masculine judgment had great weight in the discussions of these self-styled patriots. She even went so far as to engage to have certain important changes made in a decree of the Senate, which, for a woman, was going very far indeed. One is often struck with the fact that so many great Romans chose their women friends for qualities of intellect and character rather than for youth or beauty. When ambition is uppermost it has a keen eye for those who can minister to it, and a woman's talents, so lightly considered before, begin to have

their due appreciation. To a friend who said to Cæsar that certain things were not very easy for a woman to do, he simply replied: "Semiramis ruled Assyria, and the Amazons conquered Asia." It is known that he paid great deference to his mother, the wise and stately Aurelia, to whose careful training he owed so much. Later, women publicly recommended candidates for important offices. Seneca acknowledged that he owed the questorship to his aunt, who was one of the most modest and reserved as well as intelligent of matrons. "They govern our houses, the tribunals, the armies," said a censor to the Senate. If their counsels were not always for the best,—and even men are not infallible,—they were usually in the interest of good morals and good government.

Nor was it uncommon for the Roman woman to plead her own cause in the forum. There was a senator's wife who appeared often in the courts, and her name, Afrania, was applied to those who followed her example. The only speech that has come down to us was the celebrated plea of Hortensia for her own sex. This was much praised, not only by great men of that day but in after times. It showed breadth of intellect and a firm grasp of affairs. The privilege of speaking in the forum was withdrawn on account of the violence of a certain Calphurnia—an incident that might suggest a little wholesome moderation to some of our own councils and too zealous

reformers. There were also sacerdotal honors open to aspiring women. The Flaminica Augustalis offered sacrifices for the people on city altars, and the services of various divinities were always in the charge of women. There was no systematized philanthropy such as we have to-day, but we hear of much private beneficence. Women founded schools for girls and institutions for orphans. They built porticos and temples, erected monuments and established libraries; indeed, their gifts were often recognized by statues in their honor. We hear of societies of women who discuss city affairs and consider rewards to be conferred on magistrates of conspicuous merit. The names of others appear in inscriptions on tombs; but their mission is not clear. There were also women who practised medicine; this, however, may not have implied great knowledge in an age when science, as we understand it, was unknown.

II

BUT a clearer idea of the representative Roman woman on her intellectual side, and of the estimation in which she was held, is gathered through her relation to the world of letters, and in the glimpses of a sympathetic family life which we find in the private correspondence of some great men.

In the golden age of Augustus politics had ceased

to be profitable or even safe, and the educated classes turned to literature for occupation and amusement, when they did not turn to something worse. It was the fashion to patronize letters, and every idler prided himself on writing elegant verses. In the words of Horace:

> Now the light people bend to other aims;
> A lust of scribbling every breast inflames;
> Our youth, our senators, with bays are crowned,
> And rhymes eternal as our feasts go round.

Even Augustus wrote bad epigrams and a worse tragedy. Public libraries were numerous,—there were twenty-nine,—and busts of great masters were placed beside their works. Authors were petted and flattered, and they flattered their patrons in turn. These were the days when Horace lived at his ease on his Sabine farm, gently satirizing the follies and vices that were preparing the decay of this pleasure-loving world, posing a little perhaps, and taking a lofty tone toward the courtly Mæcenas and his powerful master, who honored the brilliant poet and were glad to let him do as he liked. "Do you know that I am angry with you for not addressing to me one of your epistles?" wrote Augustus. "Are you afraid that posterity will reproach you for being my friend? If you are so proud as to scorn my friendship, that is no reason why I should lightly esteem yours in return." The epistle came, but the little

gray-haired man, who saw so clearly and wrote so wisely, went on his way serenely among his own hills, stretching himself lazily on the grass by some ruined temple or running stream, and sending pleasant though sometimes caustic words to the friends he would not take the trouble to go and see unless peremptorily summoned. Such was the relation between the ruler of the world and those who conferred distinction on his reign. Ovid discoursed upon love, and became a lion, until he forgot to confine himself to theory, and went a step too far in practice. Then he was sent away from his honored place among the gilded youth who basked in the smiles of an emperor's granddaughter, to meditate on the vanity of life and the uncertainty of fame, by the desolate shores of the Euxine.

In this blending of literature and fashion women had a prominent place, though not as writers. No woman of the educated class could write for money, and talent of that sort, even if she had it, would have brought her little consideration. Whatever she may have done in that direction was like foam on the crest of a wave. It vanished with the moment. At a later period there were a few who wrote poetry of which a trace is left. Balbilla, who was taken to Egypt in the train of Hadrian and the good Empress Sabina, went out to hear the song with which Memnon greeted his mother Aurora at dawn, and scratched some verses on the statue in

honor of her visit. Possibly they were only the flattering trifles of a clever courtier, but they were graven on stone and outlasted many better things. Of wider fame was Sulpicia, the wife of a noted man in the reign of Domitian, who wrote a poem on "Conjugal Love," also a satire on an edict banishing the philosophers, fragments of which still exist. She had the old Roman spirit, but was less conciliatory than the eloquent Hortensia of an earlier day, who was tired of the brutalities of war. She mourned the degeneracy of the age, calling for "reverses that will awaken patriotism, yes, reverses to make Rome strong again, to rouse her from the soft and enervating languor of a fatal peace." The able but wicked Agrippina, of tragical memory, wrote the story of her life which gave to Tacitus many facts and points for his "Annals." Doubtless there were other things that went the way of the passing epigrams and verses of Augustus and his elegant courtiers. Twenty centuries hence who will ever hear of the thousands, yes, millions of more or less clever essays and poems written by men and women to-day and multiplied indefinitely by a facile press? What will the future antiquarian who searches the pages of a nineteenth-century anthology know of us, save that every man and woman wrote, but nothing lived, except perhaps a volume or two from the work of a few poets, essayists, and historians, who can be counted on one's

fingers? Oh, yes; there are the novelists whose value is measured by figures and dollars, who multiply as the locusts do. Fine as we may think them to-day, how many of their books will survive the sifting of time? They may be piled in old libraries, but who will take the trouble to dive into a mass that literally has no bottom? Will the world forget that women did anything worth preserving? Yet our women are educated; some of them are scholars, most of them are intelligent; many write well, and a few surpassingly well.

But if women did not write, they used their influence to find a hearing for those who did. Of the learning of the time they had their share, though it may not have been very profound. Ovid tells us that "there are learned fair, a very limited number; another set are not learned, but they wish to be so." He writes of a gay world which is not too decorous or too serious, but in the category of a woman's attractions he mentions as necessary a knowledge of the great poets, both Greek and Latin, among whom he modestly counts himself. Women of fashion had poets or philosophers to read or talk to them, even at their toilets, while the maids brushed their hair. They discussed Plato and Aristotle as we do Browning and economics. They dabbled in the mysteries of Isis and Osiris as we do in theosophy and Buddhism; speculated on Christianity as we do on lesser faiths, and began to doubt their fall-

ing gods. Philosophy was "the religion of polite society," but women have always been drawn toward a faith that appeals to the emotions. Then there were the recitations and public readings, in which they were actors as well as listeners.

We have glimpses of the more seriously intellectual side of the Roman woman in the private letters of Cicero, which show us also the pleasant family life that gives us the best test of its value and sincerity. The brilliant orator seems to have had a special liking for able and accomplished matrons. In his youth he sought their society in order to polish and perfect his style. He speaks in special praise of Lælia, the wife of Scævola with whom he studied law, also of her daughter and granddaughters—all of whom excelled in conversation of a high order; he refers often to Cærellia, a woman of learning and talent, with whom he corresponded for many years; and he says that Caius Curio owes his great fame as an orator to the conversations in his mother's house. Many other women he mentions whose attainments in literature, philosophy, and eloquence did honor to their sex and placed them on a level with the great men of their time. This was in the late days of the Republic, when genuine talent was not yet swamped in the pretensions of mediocrity.

The praise of his daughter Tullia is always on his lips. She was versed in polite letters, "the best

and most learned of women," and he valued her companionship beyond anything in life. It seems that she was unfortunate in husbands, and they gave him a good deal of trouble; but when she died the light went out of his world. His letters are full of tears, and he plans the most magnificent of monuments. He would deify her, and draw from all writers, Greek and Latin, to transmit to posterity her perfections and his own boundless love. But precious time was lost in dreams of the impossible, and swift fate overtook him before any of them crystallized. Instead of the splendid temple that was to last forever, only a few crumbling stones of his villa on the lonely heights of Tusculum are left to-day to recall the young, beautiful, and gifted woman in whose "sweet conversation" the great statesman could "drop all his cares and troubles." Here she looked for the last time across the Campagna upon the shining array of marbles, columns, and palaces that were the pride of Rome in its glory, and went away from it all, leaving behind her a fast vanishing name, the fragrance of a fresh young life, and a desolate heart.

But if these charming pictures reveal a sympathetic side of the intimate life of the new age, they give us also the shadows that were creeping over it. The great man, who said so many fine things and did so many weak ones, has always a tender message for the little Attica, the daughter of his friend,

but he fears the fortune-hunters, and objects to a husband proposed for her, because he has paid court to a rich woman who is old and has been several times married. For his own wife, Terentia, he has less consideration. She is not facile enough, and finds too much fault with his way of doing things. Perhaps she presses her influence too far, and fails to pay proper deference to his authority. To be sure, he calls her "my light, my darling," says she is in his thoughts night and day, praises her ability, and trusts her judgment until his affairs begin to go wrong. All this, however, does not prevent his sending her away after thirty years of devotion, and marrying his lovely young ward, who is rich enough to pay his debts. The latter is divorced in turn because she does not sufficiently mourn the loss of his idolized daughter, and his closing years are burdened with the care of restoring her dowry, which draws from him many a bitter complaint. There is a strange note of irony in the tone of the much-married, much-sinning, and perfidious Antony, who publicly censures the "Father of his Country" for repudiating a wife with whom he has grown old. But the high-spirited Terentia solaced herself with his friend Sallust, and married one or two others after his death. Evidently no hearts were broken, as she lived some years beyond a century.

In the literary circles of a later generation we hear of noble ladies of serious tastes meeting to con-

verse about the poets. Juvenal and Martial ridiculed them as Molière did the Précieuses centuries afterward. "I hate a woman who never violates the rules of grammar, and quotes verses I never knew," says Juvenal. "A husband should have the privilege of committing a solecism." He objects to being bored at supper with impertinent questions about Homer and Vergil, or misplaced sympathy with the unhappy Dido, who, no doubt, ought to have taken her desertion philosophically instead of making it so unpleasant for her hero lover. He even suggests that women blessed with literary tastes should put on the tunics of the bolder sex and do various mannish things which are sometimes recommended by the satirists of to-day. It is with a sigh of regret that he recalls the "good old days of poverty and morals," when it was written on a woman's tombstone that she "spun wool and looked after her house." "A good wife is rarer than a white crow," is his amiable conclusion.

All this goes to prove that in the first century women passed through the same ordeal of criticism as they have in the nineteenth. The satirists of to-day are no kinder to the Dante and Browning clubs, and mourn equally over the "good old days" when they were in no danger of a rival or a critic at the breakfast-table. Doubtless that age had its little pretensions and affectations, as every other great age has had—not excepting our own. There were

women who talked platitudes about things of which they knew nothing, and men who did the same thing or worse on other lines laughed at them just as men do now at similar follies, though often without the talent of a Juvenal or a Martial, and, it is fair to say, without their incredible coarseness. The coming of women into literature has made the latter practically impossible.

But even Martial had his better moments. He speaks of a young girl who has the eloquence of Plato, the austerity of the philosophers, and writes verses worthy of a chaste Sappho. One might imagine that his enthusiasm had run away with his prejudices, if Martial could be supposed to have had enthusiasms, as he warmly congratulates the friend who is to marry this prodigy. Possibly he preferred her as the wife of some one else, as he stipulates for himself, on another occasion, a wife who is "not too learned."

There was a great deal to censure in this dilettante world. The fashionable life of Rome had drifted into hopeless corruption, in spite of the efforts of good men and women to stem the tide. Long before, the Senate had ordered a temple to Venus Verticordia, the Venus that turns hearts to virtue; but the new goddess was not eminently successful among the votaries of pleasure, who preferred to offer incense to the more beautiful and less respectable one. The old patricians had their

faults and sins, but the new moneyed aristocracy was a great deal worse, as the *noblesse oblige* had ceased to exist, and there were no moral ideals to take the place of it. "First let us seek for fortune," says the satirist; "virtue is of no importance. Hail to wealth!" "His Majesty Gold" was as powerful as he is to-day, and his worship was coarser. "He says silly things, but money serves for intellect," remarks a wit of the time. Literature declined with morals. "These are only stores and shops, these schools in which wisdom is sold and supplied like goods," said one who mourned over the degeneracy of the times. That women should suffer with the rest was inevitable. They are not faultless; indeed, they are very simply human. If they are usually found in the front ranks of great moral movements, they are not always able to stand individually against the resistless tide which we call the spirit of the age.

III

THE changes which a century or so had wrought in the position and education of women reacted on manners. The pagan virtues were essentially masculine ones, and even women had always been more noted for courage and stoical heroism than for the softer Christian qualities which are called feminine. In the old days they had been subservient because

they were virtually slaves. For the same reason they were expected to be blindly obedient. Their servile attitude toward men was a duty; tradition gave it the force of a sentiment. Nor did the fact that many Roman women had risen above their conditions, and shown great dignity and strength, alter this general relation. It was not in their nature, however, to be timid, or tender, or clinging. Sensibility was a weakness and a trait of inferior classes. Love was a passion, or a duty, or a habit, but not a sentiment. The new woman of the golden age of Augustus was strong, dignified, self-poised, and commanding. The fashionable set accented this tone and became haughty, arrogant, and masculine in manner. It looked upon the conservative matron who was disposed to preserve old traditions as antiquated. The change, in its various gradations, was quite similar to that which passed over Anglo-Saxon women in the century that has just closed. We also have our golden mean of poise and dignity, as represented by the conservative who are yet of the new age in culture, breadth, and intelligence; we, too, have a few of the emancipated who like to demonstrate their new-found independence by a defiance of social conventions; then we have our ultra-fashionable parvenus who fancy arrogance a badge of position, and pronounced manners a sign of modish distinction. Of these classes, the first and the last were the most defined

in Roman society, but it is mainly in the last that we find the degeneracy of morals which made a large section of it infamous.

Of the women of the conservative ruling classes we have pleasant glimpses in the letters of Pliny, which picture an intelligent and sympathetic family life that constantly recalls our own. His wife, Calphurnia, sets his verses to music and sings them, greatly to his surprise and delight. She has a taste for books and commits his compositions to memory. He says she has an excellent understanding, consummate prudence, and an affection for her husband that attests the purity of her heart. It is not his person but his character that she loves, so he is assured of lasting harmony. When absent, he entreats her to write every day, even twice a day. If he has only his wife and a few friends at his summer villa, he has some author to read to them, and afterward music or an interlude. Then he walks with his family and talks of literature. The charming little domestic traits, so unconsciously revealed in these letters, are as creditable to himself as to the wife who adores him. There is a touch of sentiment that we rarely find in pagan life.

These letters throw many side-lights on other households. Pliny has a word of profound sympathy for the sorrow of a friend who lived thirty-nine cloudless years with a wife whose virtues would have made her "an ornament even in former times,"

and was left desolate by her loss. We find a touching allusion to the fortitude of Fannia, who has the qualities of a "heroine of ancient story." She was banished for supplying materials for her husband's "Life." "Pleasing in conversation, polite in address, venerable in demeanor," she is quoted as a model for wives. She was a worthy granddaughter of the famous Arria, who refused to survive her husband when he was condemned to death, and gave him courage by first plunging the dagger into her own breast, saying, "Pætus, it does not hurt," as she drew it out and passed it to him. Another of his friends lost a daughter of fourteen, who, he says, combined the wisdom of age and the discretion of a matron with the sprightliness of youth and the sweetness of virgin modesty. She was devoted to reading and study, caring little for amusements. Pompeius Saturninus read him some letters from his wife which were so fine that he thought he was listening to Plautus and Terence in prose; indeed, he suspects the husband of writing them himself, in spite of his denial, though he considers him deserving of equal praise, whether he wrote them or trained her genius to such a degree of perfection. It is worthy of note that, while these letters show us the intelligent companionship between husbands and wives which had taken the place of the old relations of superior and inferior, as well as the fine attainments of many women and the honor in which

they were held, they also pay the highest tribute to virtues that still shone brightly in an age when it had become a fashion to speak of them as things of the past.

"Morals are gone," said Seneca. "Evil triumphs. All virtue, all justice, is disappearing. That is what was exclaimed in our fathers' days, what they are repeating to-day, and what will be the cry of our children." If we may credit the history of that age, there was reason enough for the cry, but there was another side to the dark picture. This critical philosopher did not spare the vices and follies of the great ladies of his time, and any tribute of his to the talents and virtues of women is of value, as it is not likely to incline to the side of flattery. In his letters of consolation to his mother, Helvia, he mentions the fact that she is "learned in the principles of all the sciences," in spite of the old-fashioned notions of his father, who "feared letters as a means of corruption for women." More liberal himself, he exhorts her to return to them as "a source of safety, consolation, and joy." To Marcia he writes in a tone that is appreciative, though a trifle patronizing: "Who dares say that nature in creating woman has gifted her less generously, or restricted for her the sphere of the virtues? Her moral strength, do not doubt it, equals ours. . . . Habit will render her, like us, capable of great efforts, as of great griefs." An incident of his own family life is worth repeat-

ing, as it shows a pleasant and not uncommon side of domestic relations at a period when Roman morals were at the worst. His wife was solicitous for his health. "As my life depends upon hers," he says, "I shall follow her advice, because in doing so I am caring for her. Can anything be more agreeable than to feel that in loving your wife you are loving yourself?" The devotion on her side was more heroic, if less reasonable. When he was politely advised to take himself to some other world where he would be less in the way of his civil superiors, she insisted upon dying with him. He tried in vain to dissuade her, but, finding her persistent, he gave his consent, saying: "Let the fortitude of so courageous an end be alike in both of us, but let there be more in your death to win fame." Her veins were opened with his; but Nero did not need to get rid of her just then, so the attendants quickly bound her wounds and saved her. This devoted Paulina had only the satisfaction of sacrificing her color, as she was noted for her extreme pallor to the end of her life.

We have other letters from a thinker and seer of the next century, which give us as sympathetic an insight into the private life of the Antonines as Cicero and Pliny give us into that of their own contemporaries in the two preceding ones. Nowhere does Marcus Aurelius appear in so human a light as in this correspondence with Fronto, the distinguished

master and philosopher, which came to us at a late day out of the silence of ages. It reveals one of the rare friendships of the world, and incidentally throws a pleasant light on the family relations of the wisest and simplest of emperors.

History has cast a cloud over the wives of the Antonines—whether justly or not we can never know. In an age of great vices, even virtue is not safe, and the scandal-lover has always delighted to tear fair names. But the testimony of a husband surely ought to count for more than the flippant gossip of the idle voluptuary or the witty sneer of the satirist. Referring to the elder Faustina, Antoninus Pius says: "I would rather spend my life with her in Gyaros than live without her in a palace." As this desolate abode of the exile was supposed to be very uncomfortable, the compliment was not a light one. It is not in such terms that men write of faithless wives, nor is it in the nature of such women to wear the white veil of innocence for a series of years in the presence of those nearest to them. There was a temple built in her honor which still keeps guard as a church over the Roman forum, a permanent monument to the devotion of this tender husband. A charitable institution for girls, that bore her name, has long since gone the way of all perishable things.

In the letters of Aurelius, which cover a wide range of thought and experience, there are constant

references to his family. It is difficult to believe the younger Faustina as wicked as men have painted her. One of the most beautiful women of her time, as brilliant and sweet as she was beautiful, the idol of her household, the object of affectionate care on the part of her husband, this gracious woman has been a mystery to successive generations. What if the lightly spoken word of a malicious rival, or a dark insinuation from some impertinent admirer whose vanity she may have wounded, kindled a fire which the ages cannot put out? Such things have been, and may be again. "I thank the gods for giving me a wife so kind, so tender to her children, so simple," said the philosopher, who kept his soul at a serene altitude above things of sense; but he broke down when his children suffered or died, and mourned this much-loved wife as a saint, giving her divine honors. He also put a gold statue of her in the seat she had been in the habit of occupying at the theater, and had her represented in a bas-relief as borne to heaven, while he gazed after her with longing eyes.

Fronto writes that the mother of Marcus Aurelius laughingly declares herself jealous of him. He asks tenderly after the ailing *domnula*, who is the idol of her father's heart. Of his own daughter Gratia he has much to tell, playing gracefully with her name. He chats pleasantly of sleep, of health, of dreams, of the art of speech, in which he was himself a master.

But this is varied with words of affection, with tender references to the children, their pretty voices and their winning ways. He had given the little prince a silver trumpet on his birthday, and draws a charming picture of the group about their mother, the beautiful Faustina. But he loses his own admirable and much-loved wife; then his grandson dies; and his heart is torn with grief, as with sympathy for the sorrow of the gentle Gratia. Joy falls away from the spent life of the white-haired philosopher. He finds nothing to bind him longer to a sad world. His silvery periods have lost their charm. He lays down his pen, and his last words are full of pathos. He writes to an emperor who, like himself, has lived on the heights of a calm reason. The blows of fate have struck them both, and they weep, like others.

I have quoted more or less from the letters of four thoughtful and clear-sighted men, because their personal details and general tone go farther than any assertion to prove the pure and intelligent character of a large section of Roman womanhood and its refining influence in the family. They are a flattering tribute, not only to the women of the new age, but to the fine qualities of a corresponding circle of men. The life revealed by these distinguished observers who have talked so familiarly of its everyday side is certainly remote from that which has been dwelt upon by satirists and historians, but we

cannot doubt that it represents the domestic relations of an important class. It is fair to presume that the women of culture and virtue who came within their horizon were not exceptions.

IV

OF the increasing influence of Roman matrons, a strong proof may be found in the public honors they began to receive. Many of these were of a conveniently perfunctory sort, and meant little more than a tribute to the vanity of a family which demanded respect for its name; but they had their significance. It became a fashion to give women a semblance of power that was not always genuine, and to compensate them for any sorrow or neglect they might have had in this world with a fine position and a grand title, which cost little, in the next. Julius Cæsar was far from a model husband, but he celebrated the virtues of his young wife Cornelia, whom he loved devotedly, in an eloquent oration over her remains. He also pronounced a public eulogy for his aunt Julia, wife of Marius who came in for a large share of the glory. Augustus, a boy of twelve, gave a funeral oration over his grandmother. He also honored his sister, the amiable Octavia, with a eulogy and a national funeral, the first one ever given to a woman who was not a sovereign. If there have been others I do not recall

them. He decreed divine honors to Livia, but he died before her, and her ungrateful son forbade them, though the more appreciative Senate proclaimed her "Mother of her Country," and voted a funeral arch in her memory. Later, this Roman Juno was placed in the ranks of the gods by her grand-nephew Claudius, who was not wholly disinterested, as he did not wish to owe his descent to a simple mortal. The emptiness of some of these numerous honors was aptly illustrated by Nero, who killed his young but not immaculate wife, Poppæa, with a kick, then, like a dutiful husband, pronounced her eulogy and made her a diva! Many of them, however, were paid to worth and to great services for the State.

"I feel that I am becoming a god," said Vespasian, when dying, with a skeptical smile at his approaching apotheosis. Women are more trustful. Perhaps they took their divine honors more seriously, and found in them a sort of consolation, as when, in later ages, they looked wistfully from the sorrows of life toward a saint's crown.

We have seen the Roman women of primitive times reach great heights of courage and patriotism; we have seen them rise from virtual bondage to a measure of freedom and consideration. In the days of Scipio and the Gracchi they had won the privileges of education, and a certain respect for their intellectual abilities, as well as for their virtues. We find them later not only noted for fine domestic

qualities, but patrons of literature, and helpful companions of great husbands and sons. The last days of the Republic saw many strong and capable women, and we begin to trace their influence in large affairs. The instances were not numerous, perhaps, but individual talent asserted itself. With the new intelligence they moved rapidly, as our women have done, and apparently without aggression. But it was not until the privileges of rank offset in a degree the disabilities of sex that the Roman woman reached the height of her power and her honors. No doubt she sometimes schemed for a throne in the interest of a husband or a son, but she often proved herself eminently qualified for her own part in its duties and responsibilities. If her talents and energies sometimes went wrong in the lurid and immoral world in which she found herself, they were more frequently exerted for the general good.

SOME FAMOUS WOMEN OF IMPERIAL ROME

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• Three Types of Roman Womanhood •
• Livia • Octavia • Julia •
• Corruption of the Age not Due to Women •
Persecution of Virtue • Multiplication of Divorces •
• Good Women in Public Life •
• Plotina • Julia Domna • Julia Mæsa •
• Soæmias • Mamæa •
• The Old Type Gives Place to the New •

SOME FAMOUS WOMEN OF IMPERIAL ROME

I

IF one wishes to gain a clear notion of the dominant traits of the Roman woman of twenty centuries ago, there is no better way than to walk observantly through the old galleries where so many of them still live in marble, side by side with the men who made or marred their fortunes. There, graven in stone, one sees at a glance the strength, the passion, the pride, the ambition, that left its stamp upon an age. There too is the weakness, the sensuality, the arrogance, the cruelty, that ruined a life and brought misery upon a generation. Most of these women belonged to a class that held a conspicuous place in the public view by virtue of its position. Some were wicked, a few were great, and many were good though they rarely

get the credit of it. To make them live again is not easy, perhaps not possible, but we gather from many a record curious and interesting facts regarding them. Their surroundings are measurably familiar to us. We know how they looked, how they dressed their hair, how they wore their robes, how they carried themselves. With here and there a trait, an act, a passing word, an anecdote, in their relations to men and society, we may compose a picture which, if not exact, will give a fair idea of the manner of women they were.

There were three matrons in the family of the first emperor who may be taken as representatives of three dominant types of Roman womanhood. In Livia, we have the woman of affairs; in Octavia, the woman of the family; in Julia, the woman of the gay world. The first had before all things the genius of administration which was the special gift of her race; the second united the sweetest family affections with loyalty and moral strength; the last was of the numerous and dangerous class that made of society an occupation, and of pleasure an end.

Of the long line of capable women who had so strong and so lasting an influence in Roman affairs —sometimes for good and sometimes for ill—the first and the best known was Livia. Standing as she did in the blazing light that shines upon a throne, we see her on many sides—if not always clearly, at least in bold outlines. That she had beauty, tact,

fascination, and a gracious address, doubtless counted for much in her youth; but it was through her wise judgment, far-seeing intellect, well-poised character, and keen practical sense of values that this remarkable woman shared the fortunes and held the affection of Augustus for more than half a century, and had a voice in the destinies of Rome for seventy years. She has been given the purity of Diana, the benevolence of Ceres, the wisdom and craft of Minerva. There are many busts and statues of her, but they vary, and it is not possible to know which best represents the real woman. We see her in marble as Ceres—a commanding figure, with strength in every line. The passion that lies in the delicate, half-sensuous curve of the lips is overshadowed by the will that shows itself in the firm poise of the head, and the intellect that sits in the ample forehead and looks out of the serene eyes. "In features Venus, in manner Juno," says Ovid, who had ample reason to know the power of this discreet matron. She frowned upon the license of the gay set to which he belonged, and it is not unlikely that she had something to do with the hopeless exile that pressed so heavily on his last years. But he declares that "she has raised her head above all vices," dwelling upon her strength and the fact that "with the power to injure, she has injured no one."

Whatever the faults of Livia may have been, no shadow rested on her womanly honor. Probably

she had no choice when, at eighteen, the emperor took her from her husband—who found it best to submit amiably where the caprices of his sovereign were concerned—and made her his wife, this complaisant but elderly soldier of culture and influence acting as her father or guardian in the ceremony, and dying soon after. If he bore any ill will it does not appear, as he left his two children to the care of his successor. At the same time, Augustus sent away his own wife, the too jealous and exacting mother of Julia, on the day of his daughter's birth. The only failing of Scribonia seems to have been that she was imperious and did not bear her wrongs with sufficient equanimity.

This new union lasted fifty-two years, and the last recorded words of the husband were, "Livia, farewell, and do not forget our love." To some one who asked her how she retained her influence so long, she replied: "That comes from my moderation and my honesty. I have done with joy all that he wished, without trying to meddle with his affairs or showing the least jealousy as to his infidelities, which I never seemed to see." As a recipe for the management of husbands the last might be open to grave objection, from a woman's point of view, but it was the undisputed privilege of Roman men, indeed of all men in early times,—to say nothing of later ones,—to be made comfortable under any circumstances; and they made no pretense to morality.

As to meddling, Livia evidently did it as though she did it not, as it was well known that she tempered the harshness of her husband and modified many of his stern decrees.

Perhaps a better explanation of his devotion might have been found in the rare union of beauty and intelligence with the domestic virtues which he took so much pleasure in extolling. In the waning of her personal charms, she took care not to lose the attractions of a versatile intellect and agreeable manners, also to sheathe in velvet the delicate, closely welded chains of daily habit. She knew how to submit and she knew how to rule. Since life is always a series of compromises, perhaps its finest art lies just here. Maintaining the traditions of her sex, she wove and made her husband's clothes. As she had six hundred or more attendants to fold her own garments and minister to her comfort, it is not likely that these domestic duties weighed very heavily. Doubtless a little supervision sufficed for a great deal of credit. A well-managed household does not imply doing things one's self so much as the knowledge and ability to put the machinery in running order; and Livia was before all things executive, which has much more to do with brains than with virtues.

Like her husband, or because of him, she hated luxury and ostentation in her daily life. Her house was small and simple, but decorated with taste. The

pleasures of sense had little weight with her; indeed, there was a trace of asceticism in her character and in her way of living. She had various theories which we call fads. These are specially noticeable in an epicurean age, when a fortune was spent on a dinner. She limited herself to a diet of fruits and vegetables, drank a certain wine that suited the health better than the palate, and had great faith in the virtues of cold water. Augustus was cured of a grave malady by cold baths, but rumor said that the young Marcellus died of them. Just why Livia was blamed is not clear, as the treatment was prescribed by Musa, the great physician; but it was new, and she had made it a fashion.

That she had many lovable traits is shown not only by the lifelong devotion of her husband, but in the adoring affection of those who served her. In recent years a large columbarium has been found which she consecrated to the ashes of her numerous household, each of whom had his little urn with a fitting inscription. She used her large fortune generously, helped the persecuted, established a school for poor but well-born children, and did a great many charitable things. It may be true that she was cruel to her enemies, but she was loyal to her friends and untiring in their interests. Wisely holding the threads of a large and diverse patronage, she kept herself in touch with the intelligence of the new age, and was inspired by a broad and

catholic public spirit. She is said to have built and endowed the Temple of Concord, also a portico rich in ancient paintings, which bore her name. If she was at home at the wheel or loom and looking after the personal comfort of her husband, she was equally so in the coteries of the learned and in the councils of State. She was called cold, but there were slumbering depths of feeling in that strong soul which few had fathomed. When her son Drusus died, it is said that only the tender interference of her husband prevented her from starving herself to death in the violence of her grief. But she quickly regained her poise, and went about her duties public and private with no outward sign of the sorrow that had come to her like a bolt out of a clear sky. She had much of the fortitude of the Stoics in the days when philosophy was the fashionable religion. But she went to the wise and learned Arius for help and consolation, as women of later ages have gone to a spiritual adviser. Seneca holds her up as a model of strength and well-regulated sensibility. He dwells upon her heroic qualities and contrasts her favorably with the more emotional Octavia, who mourned her life away over the death of her son and other domestic misfortunes.

There was another and less sympathetic side to her character. Without imagination, and little touched with sentiment, her life seems to have been guided by a calm reason which was always at the

service of a towering ambition—a trait which, sooner or later, is sure to make the gentlest man or woman hard and cruel toward any one who stands in its way. This ambition was her master passion, and in its direction lay her faults. To her judgment and discrimination was added the craft of a diplomatist. Her grandson Caligula called her a "Ulysses in petticoats." That she had any hand in the singular falling away, one after another, of her husband's direct heirs, or that she ever passed the point where intrigue becomes crime, is the purest surmise. She had too many enemies in his family, who feared and envied her, to escape calumny; but though many dark rumors were in the air, nothing was ever proved. One youth was ill and died in Gaul, another in the far East. It is too much to suppose that she could safely have helped them out of the world at that distance, even had she wished to do so. That she schemed long and successfully to raise her son Tiberius to the throne is certain. That he repaid her with a great deal of ingratitude is equally so. Perhaps he could not forget that it was her ambition which compelled him to send away his much-loved wife, Vipsania,—whom he could never meet afterward without tears,—to marry the already notorious Julia, for whom he had a distinct aversion. But no one then stopped to consider sensibilities. If Livia was sometimes hard and cruel, she lived in an age when people who did many kind and gen-

erous things had no hesitation in walking over a rival, crushing an enemy, or even courteously suggesting to a friend who became inconvenient that it would be wise for him to take himself out of the world. The man of to-day is content with crushing rivals and ruining enemies in the name of high-sounding virtues, but he has grown humane, and lets them live. The time when fierce ambitions drove innocent victims out of life is gone by. But we can judge people only by the standards of their own day, and there is much evidence that Livia surpassed those of her time in justice and compassion.

Fortune certainly favored the aspiring empress. Her gentle sister-in-law, Octavia, died in good time for her ends. The brilliant Julia, who won hearts and stood in her way, plunged recklessly to her own ruin, taking with her into a hopeless exile the wronged but troublesome Scribonia. Of this step-daughter's sons, two were dead in a far country, and the remaining one was chained for his vices to a desolate rock in the sea. Of her daughters, one followed in the footsteps and the fate of her unfortunate mother; the other was the first Agrippina, a proud, imperious woman with her mother's beauty and her father's inflexible will and courage. This granddaughter of Augustus, so noted for her virtues, her talents, and her sorrows, had followed her husband's fortunes with wifely devotion, commanded the adoring soldiers in his absence, and returned

heartbroken, with his ashes, to stir up Rome against his supposed murderer, whose wife, one of Livia's friends, was implicated. Sure of the justice of her cause and the sympathy of the people, she defied the cruel Tiberius and the cool Livia,—who was bent upon saving her possibly innocent favorites,—to be finally sent to starve on the rocky islet where her erring mother had expiated her follies and her vices. She was a tragical figure, this spirited and haughty Agrippina with the face and air of a Minerva and the fiery spirit of Mars, who paid so heavy a penalty for her virtue and her loyalty. It is said that Livia interceded for her, though without avail; also that she supported the second hapless Julia until her death. Whether this was a stroke of diplomacy, or the impulse of a pitying heart, we cannot know.

The center of a hostile group, it is clear that Livia's rôle was a difficult one, and the skill with which she disentangled these conflicting interests is the best proof of her insight and worldly tact. She had the instinct of leadership which divines men, women, and possibilities, and is swift to bend circumstances to its own ends. If she had her full share of troubles and chagrins, she hid them within her heart, kept her own counsel in perilous crises, and pursued her way with the calmness of a strong soul. By a singular fatality, every human barrier was swept from her path, some by fate and their own misdoings, some by more kindly nature, and

some by intrigues, the mysteries of which we cannot fathom. In the end she dominated friends and enemies alike.

But, in spite of her success, the last of her eighty-eight years were burdened with griefs. Her heart was wounded in the tenderest point by the son for whom she had toiled and schemed; her pride was humiliated, and her hopes were dashed. That she played the sovereign and became capricious and exacting, was perhaps in the nature of things. No one was ever more flattered and honored by an admiring people. The Senate paid court to her, her receptions were officially announced, her signature was attached to decrees, she was attended by lictors when she went out, and had an altar on which her name was adored. She had a conspicuous place among the white-robed vestals and was made a priestess of Augustus. When she was ill the world mourned; when she recovered there were fêtes and votive offerings. "A woman in all things more comparable to the gods than to men, who knew how to use her power so as to turn away peril and advance the most deserving," said one of her contemporaries. She remained to the end a stately figure among women who have held the reality of power without its titles, not through the arts of the coquette, but through tact, wisdom, foresight, and intellectual force. With less temperament and esthetic quality, she recalls Aspasia in her vigor, her

mental grasp, and her power to hold the affection of a great man in an age when such love seems to have been rare. Perhaps we find a closer resemblance in Mme. de Maintenon, who combined her strength, her cold reason, and her political sagacity with a finer modern culture. It may be that the latter used her power less wisely, but she was a sadder woman. She reached the goal of her ambition only after the loss of her illusions, if she ever had them, and the task of catering to the caprices of a spoiled monarch was too much for her. The records of her life reveal too surely the tragedy of a soul; she lacked the stoical endurance to suffer and make no sign. Livia apparently never ceased to love the husband of her youth, and they worked in sympathy. With this firm foundation of happiness, all things were possible. One can point to no mistakes that were made through her counsels, and their weight is shown in the letters of Augustus himself. Of her wisdom and moderation, no better evidence is needed than the unparalleled cruelties of her son as soon as her restraining influence was gone.

We have able and gifted women to-day who are companions or mothers of great rulers, but I can recall no one not a reigning queen who has a like influence or has received equal honors. Have women of masterful character lost the subtle art of fascination to make it available, or are modern

rulers smaller men, who fear a rival? With us, women of this type find their place as presidents of charitable associations or powerful clubs, or leaders of a conservative society. Sometimes they are better known as wives and helpers of men with political aspirations. But we rarely hear of them in the latter rôle, as they are usually lost in a glory which they often make but do not visibly share.

II

IN striking contrast to the many-sided Livia is the less dominating but more sympathetic Octavia, who lives through her virtues and her sufferings rather than her talents. This much-loved sister of Augustus represents the conservative element of the new age, with its amiable weaknesses and time-honored graces. The idol of her brother, who, nevertheless, did not hesitate to sacrifice her to his own interests and ambitions, she was the victim of lifelong misfortune. She was said to be more beautiful than her rival, Cleopatra. If her likeness in marble can be trusted, she had not the air of command that one sees in so many statues of Roman women. There is more of sensibility in the poise of the delicately shaped head, with its broad, low forehead. In the drooping corners of the full, tender mouth lies the sorrow of years fallen into a settled melancholy. But there is no lack of strength

in the face, which shows also a quality of clear sense and practical judgment. She was noted for dignity, reserve that verged upon coldness, and great simplicity of manner. Her reputation was without a cloud. It was the wish of her brother to take her from her first husband and marry her to Pompey, in order to cement an alliance, but this proposal she absolutely refused.

After the death of Marcellus she was given, for reasons of State, to the cowardly and perfidious Antony, the Senate even setting aside a law that required a woman to wait ten months before remarriage. It was thought that her beauty, with her graces of mind and character, might win him from his follies—sad illusion, and source of many tragedies. She composed grave differences and used her influence for peace. When she returned from Athens, where she spent the first years of her marriage and was greatly loved for her gentle qualities and her fortitude in sorrow, she entreated her brother to forego his warlike purposes. "The eyes of the world are necessarily turned on one who is the wife of Antony and the sister of Cæsar," she said; "and should these chiefs of the empire, misled by hasty counsels, involve the whole in war, whatever the event, it will be unhappy for me." She gained concessions from each, and averted the immediate trouble.

But this conciliating spirit did not prevent the

fickle Antony from breaking her heart, as he had that of the fiery and ambitious Fulvia. The strongest proof of her sweetness of temper and greatness of soul may be found in the fact that she brought up the children of Fulvia with her own, also the children of Cleopatra, after the latter's death.

The worst fault ascribed to Octavia was aiding in the divorce of her own innocent daughter from Agrippa, the stern old soldier who was chosen by Augustus as a desirable husband for his only child, the young and widowed Julia. Whatever ambitions she may have had were crushed by the death of her youthful son. Naturally she did not love the intriguing sister-in-law, who ruled all about her in a way that was none the less sure because it was quiet. It is even possible that she was not unwilling to do what came in her path to circumvent the schemes of Livia for her own family. "She detested all mothers," says Seneca, "and, above all, Livia," who had domestic joys which she had not. But Seneca may not have been quite just, as he preferred women of a strong, heroic type, and this mother of sensibilities so acute that she fainted when Vergil read his eulogy of Marcellus in her presence, was not much to his liking. It is more probable, however, that resistance was useless. Where the emperor decreed, she had only to obey. Once, indeed, she had shown her loyalty and her strength by refusing a like proposal in her own case, but the mar-

riage of Julia was vital as a matter of State, and it is not likely that Augustus would have sacrificed a thing upon which he had set his heart, to the happiness of any woman whatever. Perhaps, too, she shared the common belief that private inclination must never stand in the way of public benefit. It was the *noblesse oblige* of good rulers.

Octavia no doubt had her little foibles, though it is not at all certain that this step was due to one of them; but she did not forget the duties of her position. She had wide fame as a loyal, charitable, self-sacrificing, and virtuous woman. In the spirit of the new age, she patronized talent, and gave a public library to the portico which Augustus had built in her honor, filling it with valuable paintings of classical subjects. In the failure of her hopes and the loss of her illusions, she still devoted herself to the children of Antony as well as her own, and interested herself in arranging suitable marriages for them. But these things failed to bring consolation to a bruised heart, or serenity in the troubles that had fallen upon her. She shut herself from the world after her last humiliations, and died of her griefs at fifty-four, revered and idolized by the Roman people, who resented her wrongs as much as they pitied her sufferings. But the son she never ceased to mourn had been in his tomb many a year, and the fickle husband who deserted her had ended his career in disgrace long before. She did not live

to see the downfall of Julia, the death of her august brother, or the final triumph of Livia. She was spared, too, the misfortunes that befell some of the children of her love and care.

The details of Octavia's life are few and meager. Fate gave her a prominent part to play on the world's stage, and she played it well, but with an evident longing to fall back upon her affections. She was never a woman of initiative, but she was clearly one of moral force, framed to temper the friction of more powerful individualities, but to be herself crushed in their collisions. She stands for the purest and most gracious type of Roman womanhood. Many were stronger, many were more brilliant, but few left a memory so fragrant or so sweet.

III

THERE was another woman in the household of Augustus, who represented the new age on its worst and most dangerous side. In Julia we have the woman who lived to amuse herself, and left a name which has become a synonym for the appalling corruption of Roman society. No one was placed so high, no one fell so low; and no one has been so often quoted to "point a moral or adorn a tale." But it has often been the wrong moral and the wrong tale. Bred austerely for a throne, versed in all the culture of her time, this brilliant, haughty,

impetuous daughter of the emperor led the fast set at Rome for a few years, dazzled the world with her wit and her toilets, shocked it with her escapades, only to sink at last from her lofty pedestal to untold depths of infamy and a living tomb.

Given, a woman with the sensual, dominating inheritance of the Cæsars and the pride of a new race that knows no law but its own will, without the pride of character which serves always as a balance-wheel to the passions; imagine her a widow at seventeen, and married again, with no choice, to a plain but distinguished soldier, nearly thrice her age, whose lack of patrician birth humiliated her, and whose *bourgeois* habits were not to her liking; surround her with idle and conscienceless men who make love a pursuit and the arts of flattery a study —and we have already the elements of a tragedy. This hard-headed husband wearied her; his ways were foreign to her; his world of interest was not hers. Even the public spirit which led him to give so many fine temples and works of art to the city that honored him annoyed her. She had the tastes of a dilettante, but she believed firmly in the divine right of emperors and emperors' daughters to command all things for themselves.

Nor did this petted child like any better the provincial notions of her old-fashioned father. It did not suit her to sew and spin with her stepmother, whose staid decorum irritated her. She belonged

to the pleasure-loving set of an age in which luxury was uppermost and vice was a fine art. Fatal hour in any age when fashion laughs at morals and glories in the *cachet* of would-be elegant sin! "If my father forgets that he is Cæsar, I who am his daughter have the right to remember it," said Julia, by way of comment on his democratic ways. One day at the theater he noticed the contrast between the dignified Livia, simply attired, but surrounded by grave statesmen and men of distinction, and the gaily dressed Julia with her train of gilded, dissolute youth. After his usual fashion of writing little notes when he had anything to say, he sent the latter a line of reproof. "Do not blame my young friends," was her ready answer; "they will grow old with me." On another occasion, after he had found fault with her showy appearance, she presented herself the next day in a plain and modest costume. To his compliment on the becoming change, she replied: "To-day I am dressed for my father; yesterday it was for my husband." The subtle satire in this remark was only apparent to those who knew that she dressed for all the world rather than for either.

She was gifted, witty, and cultured, we are told; but to be lettered in the age of the Cæsars did not necessarily mean learning or serious tastes. One must dabble a little in philosophy, read the Hellenic poets, patronize famous Roman writers, and be

able to talk of the Greek artists who were designing temples and flooding the imperial city with sculpture of various grades. It was even possible to have a long-haired philosopher to dress the intellect, as the maid dressed the person—the one a slave like the other. But all this might end in little more than the trifling of the dilettante, and was quite consistent with very bad morals—as it has always been and is to-day. To discourse of Ovid's "Art of Love" was agreeable enough, and not mentally exacting. To be sure, the poet did not bring his admirers into very respectable society; indeed, we should think it not only altogether vulgar, but altogether base. But it appealed to the tastes of these spoiled darlings of fortune who had nothing else to do but amuse themselves—it did not matter how, so long as due regard was paid to the so-called elegancies. From love, as the Romans understood it, to unlimited license was but a step. They did not live in the "beyond" of refined sentiment. They mixed very little intellect or imagination with their passions, though they put a certain art into the stimulants of their sensations. When Catullus wished to add a last touch of seriousness to what he called his emotions, he said that he loved Lesbia "not merely as men commonly loved a mistress, but as a father loves his sons and his sons-in-law." There was little romance in this epicurean life, in spite of a great deal of simple family affection outside of it,

which these perfumed sybarites looked upon as *bourgeois*. Splendor and not too decorous pleasure were all-sufficient. Anything else they would have laughed at as moonshine. "When Queen Money gave a dowry," said Horace, with his inimitable satire, "she gave beauty, nobility, friends, and fidelity." With the exception of Horace and Vergil, who had already grown too moral for the highest fashion, Roman poetry was incredibly coarse and demoralizing; but this was the literary food of the reckless and dashing group that gravitated from the palace on the Palatine to Baiæ, the Newport of the Roman world, rushing from one novelty to another, from one excess to a deeper and more highly spiced one, until its rapid course was run.

Of this society Julia was the center, the life, and the inspiration. The days were past when the stern father put a man of high lineage peremptorily in his place for presuming to address her in the beautiful city by the sea. The complaisant husband, absorbed in affairs, no doubt thought it best to let her go her own way, but he died possibly unsuspecting. Again the still youthful widow was married in the interest of the State and of Livia—to Livia's son. The brooding, gloomy student was equally far from filling the heart of the graceful woman who was overflowing with the joy of life, and intoxicated with a sense of power that knows no law. Livia may have been faulty enough, but she was above the

degradation of the senses. In Julia the virtues of the Roman matron seem to have been lost. When her conduct came to the knowledge of her inflexible father, he was as bitter as he had been tender. Her maid hung herself, and Augustus only said: "I would rather be the father of Phœbe than of Julia." Of the youth entangled with her, some were exiled and some took themselves out of a world that was no longer possible for them. Among the latter was the clever, fascinating, but dissolute son of Antony, who had been carefully reared by Octavia and befriended by the emperor, only to repay their kindness by striking both in the tenderest point. But Julia, the beautiful, brilliant, flattered queen of society, was sent away from all her pleasures, her luxuries, her gay companions, her matchless position, to languish for fifteen years in a desolate exile, with no friend but the mother who shared with her the bare necessaries of a squalid existence. No wine, no luxury, no fine clothes, no men-servants without special restrictions and surveillance. A rock for a home, the sea and the sky for companions, and not even hope for consolation. And she was little past thirty-five! Once she was removed to a stronghold of Calabria, with a larger guard and no added comforts, but a little less severity. Many times the Roman people, who had loved her buoyant spirit and winning personality, begged her inexorable father to forgive her. "I wish you all had

such daughters and such wives," was his only reply. She died shortly after her father, to lie, unsung and forgotten, far from her kindred in an unknown grave. Not a word is left to tell us the details of that long tragedy. Her daughter Julia inherited her vices and suffered a like fate.

IV

IT is needless to recall here the notorious women who followed in the footsteps of Julia, and added to all her sins a cruelty which she had not. The world is familiar enough with the crimes of Messalina, the second Agrippina, Poppæa, and others whose names have become a by-word and a reproach to womanhood. Men, and sometimes women, gravely tell us that these moral monsters are a measure of Roman standards, and a logical result of the culture of the feminine intellect. That two things exist at the same time does not prove that one is the result of the other. The facts in this case, indeed, prove quite the contrary. It would be idle to say that the weaker half of the human family hold a monopoly of the virtues, or that it is in the nature of things for them to pass unscathed through the fiery ordeal of a corrupt age whose supreme end lies in pleasures of sense. But even in Rome at its worst there was a great deal of pure family life, and its conservation rested with women. I have

quoted elsewhere from the private letters of distinguished Romans who have given us pleasant glimpses of refined, accomplished, and learned women, as free from the taint of moral laxity as our own; and this when men made no claims to morality themselves. To the great body of Roman women a spotless virtue was among their most cherished traditions. So far from finding their increased intelligence a cause of the decline in morals, it is a fact that those of the highest character and ability constantly suffered indignity and wrong, because their presence was a restraint upon their unscrupulous masters. Long domination had fostered the egotism of men to such an extent that they could not brook opposition of any sort, and it was the ignorant and flexible who bent the most easily to their will, even when it led them to the last extreme of moral subservience. Only a fearless courage and a strong conviction could venture to take high ground against the fashionable sins of men in power. It is always more or less true that when a dominant class lowers its moral standards, it likes to ostracize those who even tacitly reflect upon it.

Examples of this in Roman life are so numerous that two thousand years have not sufficed to hide them all. Of women in high places who suffered death or banishment for their virtues, the list is a long one. Caligula decreed the same honors to his grandmother, the pure and high-minded Antonia,

which had been given to Livia. But when this dignified matron, worthy daughter of the gentle Octavia, presumed to reprove him for his vices, he starved her to death. Vitellius banished his mother, Sextilia, a woman of admirable character, because she wept at his elevation to the throne. This was a reproach which he could not brook, and, failing to break her heart by his cruelties, he took her life, or made it so intolerable that she was forced to end it herself. It was impossible for a good woman to stay in the palace, and the Empress Galeria begged permission to retire to a modest dwelling on the Aventine. Domitian ordered a vestal, charged with scandalous acts which were denied and not proved, to be buried alive; but he consistently marked virtue for persecution, hesitated at no crime, and declared a woman to be "a natural slave, with man for her divinely appointed master." Carrying this to its logical conclusion, he made the Palatine unsafe for any woman. That the great heart of Roman womanhood was on the side of loyalty and virtue, and looked upon conjugal infidelity as a sin to be frowned upon even in men, is shown by their attitude toward Nero when he sent away his young, lovely, and innocent wife, Octavia, to marry the most dissolute woman of the time. Many men remonstrated, and women rose in a body to demand her return. For the moment he thought it best to yield to the popular clamor, but he soon invented a

pretext to send her to the long silence from which there is no return. Yet she was beautiful, of cloudless fame, and had lived hardly twenty years! Roman history is full of instances of moral heroism on the part of women, that had no counterpart among men, and of feminine virtue held at the expense of life. Servilia, the youthful daughter of Soranus, took upon herself a fault for which it was sought to compass her father's death, and not being able to save him, died with him. Women in great numbers retired in sad dignity from a society whose current of vice they were powerless to change. A stately and pathetic figure is Pomponia Græcina, who wore mourning for forty years, and never smiled after her friend Julia, the daughter of Drusus, was murdered by Messalina. It was a pitiless world in which neither virtue nor life was safe, but it had its heroines, and they were not few.

Nor can the number of divorces be placed to the account of women. When a Julius Cæsar takes his tenderly loved daughter from her husband and marries her to another man in the interest of his own ambitions; when an Augustus makes laws against immorality, yet divorces an innocent wife who objects to his own infidelities, and puts in her place a beautiful woman of unsullied fame, whom he has taken from a worthy man; when both of these rulers of the world compel good citizens to divorce the consorts they possibly love, in order to dispose of one

or the other for personal ends or the good of the State—it is hardly worth while to hold helpless women responsible for conditions made and enforced by men in power, who are called wise and think themselves passably good. The most that can be said is that women of knowledge and character are less likely to bear wrong and abuse silently, but they are more likely to uphold the dignity of the family and to ignore the petty vanities and jealousies which are among the most prolific causes of divorce. A cultivated intellect does not necessarily imply good morals, but, other things being equal, an educated woman is less easily led into wrong, as she has more resources and is better fitted to stand on her own feet; unfortunately, this is precisely what her critics in the past have not wished her to do.

With so many conspicuous examples in high places, it is hardly strange that divorces became deplorably common. "Does anybody blush at a divorce," says one, "since illustrious and noble women compute their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of husbands they have had?" We hear of a woman who was the twenty-first wife of her twenty-third husband. The pretexts were often slight. It was said of Mæcenas that he had been divorced a thousand times, though he had but one wife, as he loved her and always married her over again. The woman who had been but once married was honored as a *univira*. She

was too often, however, like a goddess worshiped from afar by men who found both interest and pleasure in the number of their wives. Much of the trouble was due to the fortune-hunters, who did not scruple to use any means to get rid of a wife and retain her dowry, at the expense of her fair name. Even good women were so wholly at the mercy of false charges that Antoninus made a law that no man could bring suit against his wife for immorality unless he could prove his own fidelity. We know that wise and virtuous women were often forced to seclude themselves from the aggressions of wicked men against whose machinations they were unable to find protection.

There was one law, however, which might be considered to advantage by some of our own legislators. It had been decreed that no one should marry sooner than six months after a divorce. Augustus extended the time to eighteen months. We talk much and with a fine consciousness of superior virtue about the chaotic state of Roman marriages. What will our fortieth-century moralist who reads present history, as photographed from day to day in the blazing journals, say of the decadence of a civilization in which people may marry two hours after divorce, or find themselves some fine morning released from their marriage bonds without knowing it? And we are an eminently moral people.

On the influence of the Roman women let the

Romans speak for themselves. It was proposed in the Senate that men should not be permitted to take their wives into the provinces, as they had too much power with the soldiers, interfered in settling business affairs, and made another center of government —indeed, they sometimes "presided at the drill of cohorts and the evolutions of the legions," besides dividing the homage. The majority of the senators objected to this bill, and pronounced its author "no fit censor." An able and eloquent man, in reply to it, said that "much of the sternness of antiquity had been changed into a better and more genial system." A few concessions had been made to the wants of women, but "in other respects man and wife share alike." There might be some scheming women, but were the magistrates free from various unworthy passions, and was this a reason why none should be sent to the provinces? If husbands were sometimes corrupted by their wives, were single men any better? "It is idle to shelter our own weakness under other names; for it is the husband's fault if the wife transgresses propriety." This wise orator was sustained by eminent men who gave their own fortunate experiences, and the bill was lost. Such a tribute to the helpfulness and strong character of the Roman woman may be commended to a few of our enlightened thinkers who, curiously enough, use the low standards of men who never pretended to be moral, and the frailties of dependent women who

were not permitted to be so, or of a class that has always appealed to the weaknesses of men since the beginning of the world, to prove the degeneracy of society under the influence of feminine intelligence! It was never the woman of strong intellectual fiber and serious interests that Rome had to fear. It was another class, that did not, in any sense, represent her either in intelligence or character.

V

THE wicked side of the Roman woman—and this was sometimes very wicked indeed—has been sufficiently emphasized. It is more agreeable and perhaps more profitable to consider her better side. Her talent was essentially administrative, and we find many illustrations of it among those who were conspicuous in public life. There were strong and wise women who had great power; as a rule, it was held wisely. Many of them, indeed most of them, brought moral questions to bear upon State problems, with a keen discriminating insight into conditions that troubled the hearts of wise men. Their number was small, as no woman below the rank of an empress was eligible to the smallest position of influence, aside from the religious offices, which were largely perfunctory; but it was sufficient to show a quality of womanhood that was not only strong, but intrinsically fine and noble.

Of these, as we have seen, the most striking representative was Livia. Among those who followed more or less in her footsteps was Plotina, the able and accomplished wife of Trajan. Trained in the philosophy of the Stoics, her head was turned neither by prosperity nor misfortune. She entered the palace, on her husband's elevation to the throne, with serene dignity, and said that she could leave it with equal calmness. With less ambition than the first empress, she had a finer moral sense, also the gravity and firmness of a matron of the old school. She loved truth and justice better than the pageantry of courts, and ignored the claims of an artificial society. A woman of brilliant intellect, noble character, and exalted aims, she led a simple life in the midst of luxury, and used her power not only to raise the tone of morals and to foster a taste for letters, but to expose political corruptions, suppress abuses, diminish unjust taxes, and promote financial reforms. It was through her influence that Hadrian was adopted, a favor which he recognized by extending her authority in his reign, and writing hymns in her praise. The trace of asceticism in her character and manners did not please the idlers who liked to bask in the sunshine of a gay and luxurious court. She was censured and talked about, with little enough reason as it seems, as no records have left a shadow on her reputation. Her fault, in the eyes of bad men, lay in her moral force. To frown upon

vice, to oppose corruption in high places, was an unwarranted interference with their natural rights. But good men sustained her. At her death she was placed in the ranks of the gods and honored with a temple dedicated to the " Mother of the People."

A more conspicuous example of the ability of the women who figured in the public life of Rome is found in Julia Domna, the Syrian wife of Septimius Severus, who is said to have owed his success to her wise counsels. She was not simply an ambitious woman who schemed for place and power. To a genius for diplomacy she added the fascinations of beauty, wit, and imagination. She had a knowledge of history, philosophy, geometry, and the sciences of her time, was a patron of art, and made her court a center of all that was left of literature and culture in an age of decadence. Her husband evidently did not object to a learned woman, as he had a special admiration for Arria " because she read Plato." Then this clever wife—who was called " Julia the philosopher," surrounded herself with savants, and loved to discuss great subjects—put her versatile intellect to his service and advancement. Her youth was not free from rumors of follies, but no woman of note escaped these, even if she were pure as Diana. Her father was a " priest of the Sun," and she was always a student, with a tendency toward Oriental mysticism. She ruled wisely and made the fortune of her family. In her last years she

sought refuge from many sorrows in the resources of her intellect, but these failed to bring her happiness. The wicked Caracalla, who did not profit by his mother's wisdom, killed his brother in her arms, and finally broke her heart.

Her sister, Julia Mæsa, shared her abilities, and, with the aid of her daughters, secured the throne for her grandson. She was no doubt ambitious, but was known as wise, just, and moderate. This family, which ruled Rome for many years, was a remarkable one, but its credit was sustained mainly by its women. One of the daughters of Julia Mæsa was Soæmias, who was the first woman to take her place in the Senate and attach her name to legislative decrees. She also presided over the Little Senate, a sort of "woman's club," which regulated morals, dress, etiquette, and other matters pertaining to her sex. It was accused of gossip and scandal; but as this accusation has been made against every association of women, from the coterie of Sappho to the modern sewing-society and the last luncheon club, it cannot be taken too seriously. Let the man who lounges about the clubs of to-day, —as his Greek and Roman predecessors did about the porticos, gymnasia, or baths,—and has never heard or repeated any gossip of his fellow-men and -women, throw the first stone.

But Soæmias had a bad son, the Heliogabulus of infamous note, whom she could not save or reform,

and she was wise enough to pave the way for the succession of her sister's more reputable one, after his death. This sister, Mamæa, was virtually regent during the minority of Alexander Severus, whose purity of character and conduct she guarded with the greatest care. She tried to apply the moral ideals of womanhood to the men of the period, and found the task a difficult and thankless one. Without assuming the trappings of power, she administered the affairs of the empire with wisdom and judgment. An able, humane, and thoughtful woman of conservative tendencies and limited ambition for herself, she declined to sit in the Senate, but chose a body of just and learned counselors to decide upon public questions, while she discussed Christianity with her friend Origen, founded a school for the free education of orphans, gave her son a serious training for his future responsibilities, and worked for the moral betterment of a world that did not wish to be bettered in that way. Her standards were too high, and she reformed too much for people who found license and corruption more to their interest and liking. The Senate was jealous of her wise and just counselors, who could not be used as tools for unscrupulous ends. Impatient, at last, of their interference, and incensed at a woman who wished a moral government, it passed a law excluding women from its ranks and "devoting to the infernal gods the head of the wretch by whom this decree should be violated." With singu-

lar consistency, however, it voted her an apotheosis after ridding itself of the restraining influence of her virtues by practically sending her to a violent death.

VI

THESE few instances, gathered from many that are more or less familiar to the student of history, may serve to show in some degree the influence of strong and able women in the affairs of Old Rome. They show, also, the intellectual as well as moral force of the best type of pagan womanhood, which was formed after classic ideals of an heroic pattern.

There were still women of learning and distinction when the old standards had fallen and society was sunk in the grossest materialism. The last and greatest of these was an alien. It was at Tivoli, in the shadow of the Sabine Hills, that Zenobia, a captive, and alone with her children among the ruins of her past grandeur, solaced herself with letters and philosophy. Her teacher, minister, counselor, and friend, Longinus, had paid the penalty of his devotion with his life, and the world was poorer by the loss of one of its immortal thinkers. But he left an apt pupil in a woman who had treasured his wisdom and profited by his marvelous knowledge. An Amazon in war, empress, linguist, Platonist, with the grasp of a statesman and the insight of a seer, this gifted, eloquent, and versatile woman of flashing dark eyes, winning manners, and Oriental

beauty, who graced a triumph like a goddess and met misfortune like a philosopher, is a shining example of the dignity and greatness of a type that was passing. "Who has ever shown more prudence in council, more firmness in her undertakings, more authority over her soldiers, more discernment in her conduct?" said her arch-enemy Aurelian, who bowed to her talents, felt her fascinations, but made a spectacle of her sorrow and humiliation to add a jewel to his crown.

It is idle to depreciate the qualities of the pagan women. Under all their disabilities, which were many, those whose position gave them a certain freedom of movement often attained great heights through their gifts of character and intellect. There were great wives, great mothers, great administrators, great rulers, great writers among the more sensitive races, and great women, which means a symmetry of mind, heart, and intellect in large proportions. But the ages in which they lived were masculine ones—masculine in their cruelties and their vices, as well as in their force and their theories of virtue. Women did not escape the contagion, and when they plunged into abysses of corruption, it was with the abandon of a passionate temperament. Still, it was the voices of those who were too strong and too intelligent to be blindly led that were first raised in a moral protest, the echo of which has not yet died away.

MARCELLA, PAULA, AND THE FIRST CONVENT

MARCELLA, PAULA, AND THE FIRST CONVENT

• Woman's Need of a Faith •
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MARCELLA, PAULA, AND THE FIRST CONVENT

I

"THE majority of men, and especially of women, whose imagination is double, cannot live without a faith," said the Abbé Galiani, "and those who can, sustain the effort only in the greatest force and youth of the soul." How far this may be true it is needless to discuss here, but it is certain enough that women have been the strongest agents in the religious movements of the world. A tender heart may go with a skeptical mind, but the fine type of womanhood, in which reason is tempered with love and imagination, inevitably turns to some faith for support in seasons of moral decadence as in moments of sorrow and despair. This has never had a more striking illustration than in the reaction of a large class of Roman

women from the vices, follies, and debasing pleasures of a civilization falling into ruin, toward an extreme asceticism. At this moment in its history the golden age of Rome was long past, and the world was to wait more than a thousand years for another brilliant flowering of the human intellect on the same soil. But glory of a different sort set its seal upon the women of the darkening ages. To the enthusiasms of patriotism and passion, culture and ambition, succeeded the enthusiasms of religion.

In the fourth century the images of the pagan gods, white and silent on their stone pedestals, still kept guard over the city. Their temples were comparatively fresh, but the gods themselves were dead. The seventy thousand statues that made Rome a forest of marbles in the days of its glory had not lost their majesty, their beauty, or their grace; but the spirit which had made them alive had gone with their virgin purity. Pan held his flute as of old, but it was mute. Bacchus still wore his vine-leaves and his air of rollicking mirth, but the bands of roistering men who had once paid him homage no longer cared for a god to preside over their plain worship of the senses. Venus had taken off her divine halo and gone back to the foam of the sea whence she came, leaving only the smiling face of a beautiful woman. The Muses had ceased to dance to the lyre of Apollo, and the god of light was asleep like the rest. Men and women had

thrown aside the thin veil of idealism with which they had once invested their sins, and Rome was become a sink of iniquity without even the leaven of the Hellenic imagination. Between a life of the senses and a life of the intellect, it gravitated from a wild orgy to a passionless philosophy that held its own pulse and counted its own heart-beats as it drifted curiously and mockingly into the unknown.

But women do not carry easily the burden of a cold skepticism, and philosophy failed to satisfy them. When the age became hopelessly corrupt, and men scoffed at morals, sending one another to death for inconvenient virtues, they had been swept along with the current, and many plunged into a life of the senses with the recklessness of an ardent, virile temperament. But there was still a large number of intelligent matrons who preserved the waning traditions of an educated womanhood, and these revolted at the hopeless vacuum of a life devoted to intrigue and the tiresome mysteries of the toilet. The jewels, silks, and embroidered gauzes of fabulous cost had no more charm for them. Nor did they care to please the curled and perfumed sybarites who gambled or discussed the last bit of scandal in their pillared halls, fanned by slaves, and crying out at the crumple of a rose-leaf. The Roman women had been distinguished for the stronger qualities of character. Their bounding energies had been shown in deeds of

heroism. They had to a large degree the ardors of the imagination. These traits, together with the moral sense that lies at the base of the feminine nature, though often submerged for a time, vindicated themselves in the passionate devotion with which so many turned from a beautiful but bad world toward things of the spirit.

They had already been captivated in numbers by the mystic cults of the Orient. Out of the East, whence came the pagan gods as well as the luxury and sensualism which had sapped the moral life of Rome, came also the "still small voice" of a new faith, with unfamiliar messages of hope and consolation. It had been singing its hymns for nearly three hundred years in that great under-world, of which little note had been taken, except in periodical outbursts of persecution. In the vast network of dark passages and lighted cells which lay far from the light of the sun; beneath the shining temples and statues of the gods they were undermining; beneath the groves, and gardens, and fountains, and palaces in which vice reigned and idle voluptuaries were inventing new refinements of sin to spur their jaded senses—the disciples of a lowly faith which trampled upon all that these Epicureans loved, making a sin of pleasure and a joy of suffering, had met to offer incense at strange altars. It was women, with their natural tendency toward a personal devotion and a self-sacrifice strengthened

perhaps by the forced self-effacement of centuries, who embraced with the most passionate fervor a religion that deified all that was best and most distinctive in their own natures. This religion, with its spirit of love, its trust in some other existence that would compensate a thousandfold for the sorrows of this, appealed to them irresistibly. Already it had brought peace and a martyr's crown to multitudes of the poor and ignorant who had little to lose but their lives. It had gained, too, a firm foothold among the cultivated classes, who did not always forsake the things of the world in their acceptance of things of the spirit. But the fact that it had become a State religion had not made it a fashionable one, though its later votaries often outdid their pagan neighbors in luxury and worldliness.

One day in the later years of the fourth century, a rich, noble, educated, and able woman withdrew in weariness and disgust from the vanities and unblushing vices of Roman society, fitted up an oratory in her stately palace on the Aventine, and asked her friends to join her in the worship, duties, and sacrifices of the Christian faith. This was the germ of the Church of the Household, the *Ecclesia Domestica*, on which St. Jerome has thrown so bright a light—the small beginning of the vast combinations of women, in which one of the greatest religious movements of the world found its strongest instrument and support. Nothing shows

more clearly the strength and moral purity of the large body of Roman womanhood than the numbers who flocked to a standard that offered no worldly attractions, and imposed, as the first of duties, self-renunciation and the denial of all pleasures of sense.

II

IT is not likely that Marcella had any thought of the vital significance of a step that opened a new field to women, which absorbed their talents and energies for ten centuries, sometimes for good, sometimes for ill, and still holds a powerful attraction for certain temperaments. She belonged to one of the noblest families of Rome, and had led the life of the more serious of the rich patricians of her time. Her mother was the Albina who had entertained Athanasius many years before, and shown great interest in his ascetic teachings. He held up solitude and meditation as an ideal, and no doubt his words, which she must have heard discussed afterward, made a strong impression on the imagination of the thoughtful child. They came back with a new force later, when she lost her husband a few months after marriage. In spite of much criticism, she retired from a world which no longer had any attractions for her, gave away her jewels and personal adornments, put on a simple brown

robe, and gave herself to religious and charitable work. At first she sought seclusion in her country villa, but she was of too active and wholesome a temperament for a life of solitary brooding and introspection. It was after the early days of her grief were passed that she opened her palace on the Aventine, and made it a center for the devotional women of Rome.

There was nothing in the life she planned to tempt her ambition. Nor did she abdicate the world and its pleasures on account of the waning of her charms. She was still in the fullness of life, young, beautiful, rich, and much sought in marriage by men of the highest rank and position. In her persistent refusal of their brilliant offers she met with great opposition from her family, who evidently preferred the ascetic life for some one outside of their own circle. But she was a woman of strong, vigorous intellect and firm character, as well as fine moral aims and religious fervor. Born to lead and not to follow, she was never the reflex of other minds. We find in all the known acts of her life the stamp of a distinct and well-poised individuality. If she started on a new path, it was through the reaction of a pure and conscientious nature from a society in which the virtues seemed dying, the need of an outlet for emotions suddenly turned upon themselves, and the going out toward humanity of the unsatisfied longing of motherhood.

To this quiet but palatial retreat on the Aventine —which tradition places not far from the present site of Sta. Sabina—many women fled from the gay world of splendor and fashion. They were mostly rich and high-born; some were widows, who consecrated a broken life to the service of God and their fellow-men; a few were devoted maidens. The oldest of the little group was Asella, a sister of Marcella, who had been drawn from childhood to an ascetic life. She dressed like a pilgrim, lived on bread and water with a little salt, slept on the bare ground, went out only to visit the graves of the martyrs, and held it a jewel in her crown that she never spoke to a man, though she evidently did not object to receiving letters from the good St. Jerome. He speaks of her as "an illustrious lady, a model of perfection," and says that no one knew better how to combine "austerity of manner with grace of language and serious charm. No one gave more gravity to joy, more sweetness to melancholy. She rarely opened her mouth; her face spoke; her silence was eloquent. A cell was her paradise, fasting her delight. She did not see those to whom she was most tenderly attached, and was full of holy ardor." But hardships and low diet seem to have agreed with this saintly woman, as she was well, in spite of them, through a long life, in which she won praises from good and bad alike. Lea is a dim figure at this distance, but she was spoken of

as " the head of a monastery and mother of virgins," who died early and was greatly honored for her goodness, her humility, her robe of sackcloth not too well cared for, her days of fasting, and her nights of prayer.

More noted was Fabiola, a member of the great Fabian family, who had been divorced from a vicious husband and made a second marriage which seems to have lain heavily on her tender conscience when she became a widow shortly afterward. Indeed, she went so far in her remorse as to stand in the crowd of penitents at the door of the Lateran on Easter Eve, clad in coarse sackcloth, unveiled, and weeping, with ashes on her head and hair trailing, as she prostrated herself and waited for public absolution. It is said that bishop, priests, and people were alike touched to tears at the humiliation of the young, gay, and beautiful woman, the idol of a patrician society. But her religious enthusiasm was more than a sudden outburst of feeling. This pale devotee gave her large fortune to charity, built the first Christian hospital, gathered from the streets the sick, the maimed, and the suffering, even ministering with her own hands to outcast lepers. Her charities were boundless, and extended to remote islands of the sea. St. Jerome calls her a heroine of Christianity, the admiration of unbelievers. But her intellect was clear and brilliant, and her close questionings spurred him to write of many things

which would otherwise have been left in darkness. In her later days she surprised him one evening in the convent at Bethlehem, where she was visiting her friends, by reciting from memory a celebrated letter in praise of a solitary and ascetic life which he had written to Heliodorus many years earlier. It was the letter which had brought so much censure on the austere monk, as it sent great numbers of noble women and many men into the ranks of the hermits and cenobites.

This woman of talent and fashion, who left the gay world to become saint, philanthropist, nurse, and pilgrim, died shortly before the terrible days came to Rome, and its temples resounded with psalms in her honor. Young and old sang her praises. The galleries, housetops, and public places could not contain the people who flocked to her funeral. So wicked Rome, in the last days of its fading glory, paid homage to women of great virtues, great deeds, and unselfish lives.

But the most distinguished of the matrons who frequented the chapel on the Aventine was Paula, a descendant of Scipio and the Gracchi on one side, and, it was claimed, of Agamemnon on the other. The Romans did not stop at myths or probabilities in their genealogies, and her husband traced his ancestry to Æneas. But it is certain that Paula belonged to the oldest and noblest family in Rome. She had an immense fortune, and had

passed her life in the fashionable circles of her time. A widow at thirty-three, with five children, and inconsolable, she suddenly laid aside the personal insignia of her rank, exchanged cloth of gold for a nun's robe, silken couches for the bare ground, gaiety for prayers, and the costly pleasures of the sybarite for days and nights of weeping over the most trivial faults, imaginary or real. Even the stern St. Jerome begged her to limit her austerities; but she said that she must disfigure a face she had been so wicked as to paint, afflict a body which had tasted so much delight, and expiate her laughter with her tears. She dressed and lived as poorly as the lowest of her servants, and expressed a wish to be buried as a beggar. Full of a sweet and tender humanity, however, she was no less pitiful to others than severe to herself.

Of her four daughters, Eustochium, a serious girl of sixteen, sympathized most with her ascetic views and was closely associated with her life-work. She was the first patrician maiden to take the vow of perpetual virginity. But the flower of the family was her sister Blæsilla, "older in nature, but inferior in vocation," said St. Jerome. Beautiful, gay, clever, young, and a widow after seven months of marriage, she loved things of the world and had small taste for the austerities of her mother. She found time for study, however, as she spoke Greek fluently and learned Hebrew so rapidly that she bade

fair to equal Paula, who liked to sing the psalms of David in the rugged and majestic language in which they were written. But a violent fever turned her thoughts from mundane vanities to a life of asceticism. No more long days before the mirror, no more decking of her pretty little person. She put on the brown gown like the others, and devoted her brilliant youth to the same service. But so excessive were her penances, so rigorous her fastings, and so severe her austerities, that she died of them at twenty, asking God to pardon her because she could not carry out her plans of devotion and self-sacrifice. Her funeral was hardly in keeping with these plans. All the world did honor to the beautiful, accomplished woman who had forsaken a life of elegant ease for the hardships of a self-imposed poverty. They covered her coffin with cloth of gold, and the most distinguished men in Rome marched at the head of the cortège. Her untimely death brought an outburst of indignation against the mother who had encouraged a self-denial so hard and unnatural. But this mother had fainted as she followed her idolized daughter to the tomb. St. Jerome dwells upon the piety, innocence, chastity, and virtues, as well as the more brilliant qualities, of the *dévote* who had gone so early, but while the tears flowed down his own cheeks, he reproved Paula for permitting the mother to overshadow the religieuse. He adds a curious bit of consolation,

however, for a spiritual adviser who has renounced all worldly motives and interests, when he tells her that Blæsilla will live forever in his writings, as every page will be marked with her name. This immortality he modestly thinks will compensate her for the short time she spent on earth.

III

THESE brief outlines indicate the character and position of a few of the best-known women who gathered about Marcella. Some of them lived with her; others came from time to time, or were constant attendants at the Bible readings and prayers. Saintly women, and worldly ones who were doubtless eager to flock to the little chapel in a palace that represented to them a great name, if not a living faith, had been going in and out for some years before St. Jerome came from the East at the summons of Pope Damasus, and was invited by Marcella to stay at her house, after the manner of famous divines of all ages. It is to this most interesting and learned of the early fathers that we are indebted for the blaze of light that was thrown upon the Church of the Household. It was also to this group of consecrated women that St. Jerome owed the inspiration and the intelligent criticism that led him to give the world some of the works on which his greatest fame rests. The circle that listened to

his persuasive eloquence, born of a keen intellect, an ardent imagination, a passionate temperament, and an exalted faith, was not an ignorant one. Most of these ladies spoke Greek and were familiar with Greek letters. Some had learned Hebrew, which was not included among the fashionable accomplishments of the day. A few were women of brilliant ability and distinct individuality, who could not live in the world without leaving some trace of themselves. The discriminating mind of Marcella exercised itself on every new problem. "During the whole of my residence at Rome she never saw me without asking some question about history or dogma," said St. Jerome. "She was not satisfied with any answer I might give; she never yielded to my authority only, but discussed the matter so thoroughly that often I ceased to be the master and became the humble pupil." It would have been better for him if he had given more heed to her gentle voice when she tried to temper his bitterness and restrain his unruly tongue. We have another proof of the solid fiber of her intellect in the fact that she was consulted on Biblical matters by Roman ecclesiastics, even by the Pope himself; indeed, it was her counsel that led Pope Anastasius to condemn the heresies of Origen in the synod.

It may easily be imagined that the pale, slender, ascetic monk of thirty-four, with the light of genius in his eye, the fire of sublimated passion in his soul,

and the vein of poetry running through his nature, had a strange power over these women who lived on moral heights quite above the heavy worldly atmosphere about them. This spiritual exaltation has swayed women of ardent imagination ever since the days of the apostles, and doubtless swayed them before. It was the secret of Savonarola's influence. Under the inspiration of the persuasive Nicole, the earnest Arnauld, and the austere Pascal, the great ladies of France put off their silks and jewels with their mundane vanities, and knelt in the bare cells at Port-Royal, with the haircloth and the iron girdle pressing the delicate flesh as they prayed. Fénelon found his most ardent disciple in the mystic Mme. Guyon. The pure soul of Mme. Swetchine responded to the earnest words of Lacordaire as the Æolian harp vibrates to the lightest breath of wind. "I cannot attach to your name the glory of the Roman women whom St. Jerome has immortalized," he says, "and yet you were of their race. . . . The light of your soul illumined the land that received you, and for forty years you were for us the sweetest echo of the gospel and the surest road to honor." It is needless to recall the power of many spiritual men of our own race and day in leading the serious and gay alike into paths of a rational self-renunciation. Perhaps the little coterie in which St. Jerome found himself was more permanently severe in its self-discipline than most

of the later ones have been. Doubtless there was a little blending of the church and the world, of literature and prayers, of gilded trappings with the nun's robe and the monk's cowl. But when these Roman women came into the devoted household on the Aventine, they usually renounced the world very literally, though it is not unlikely that they had a following of those who mingled a pale and decorous piety with their worldly pleasures, as did many of the priests whom St. Jerome attacks with such biting sarcasm.

Then this monk of many dreams and visions, with his halo of saintship, was fresh from the hermits and cenobites of the Thebaid. The even-song that went up from countless caves and cabins under the clear Egyptian sky still lingered in his ear as he expatiated on the paradise of solitude. Forgetting in his zeal the violent moral struggles he had passed through himself, he appealed to them in impassioned words to immolate every natural affection on the altar of a faith that invited them to a life of prayer and meditation far from the tempting delights of a sinful world. It was under this teaching that the ascetic spirit grew so strong as to call out the indignation of the pagan society of Rome. People of the fourth century were as fond of gossip as are the men and women of to-day, and no more charitable. Malicious tongues were whispering evil things of the gifted and famous monk who exer-

cised so pernicious an influence over the wives and daughters of illustrious Roman citizens, inciting them to fling away their fortunes for a dream and seclude themselves from the world to which they belonged. He had spent three years in an atmosphere that must have been grateful to his restless and stormy spirit. But now he found that he was bringing reproach upon those he most revered and loved, so in the summer of 385, when Pope Damasus died, and his occupation was gone, he bade farewell to his friends, and went back to the East, leaving a letter to Asella in which he bitterly denounces those who had dared to malign him. Of Paula he says that "her songs were psalms, her conversations were of the gospel, her delight was in purity, her life a long fast." Yet his enemies had presumed to attack his attitude toward the saintly woman whose "mourning and penance had touched his heart with sympathy and veneration."

But his pleadings for a life of penitence and sacrifice had not been in vain. A few months later Paula carried out a plan which had been for some time maturing, and followed him, with her daughter Eustochium and a train of consecrated virgins and attendants. The power of religious enthusiasm was never shown more clearly than in this able and learned matron, who had all the strength of the Roman character together with the mystical exaltation of a Christian sibyl. That she was a woman

of ardent emotions is evident from the violence of her grief at the death of her daughter and her husband. But in spite of her family affections she was firm in her purpose to leave home and friends for a life of hardship in the far East. The tears of her youngest daughter, Rufina, who begged her to stay for her wedding-day,—which, alas! she never lived to see,—were of no avail. Her little son entreated her in vain. The words of St. Jerome were ringing in her ears. "Though thy father should lie on the threshold, trample over his body with dry eyes, and fly to the standard of the cross," he had said. "In this matter, to be cruel is the only true filial affection."

Several years before, Melania, a widow of twenty-three, had sailed away to the Thebaid, on a similar mission. She too had passed through great sorrows. With strange calmness and without a tear, she had buried her husband and two sons in quick succession, thanking God that she had no longer any ties to stand between her and her pious duties. And for this hardness St. Jerome had applauded her, holding her up as an example to her sex! She too had turned away dry-eyed and inflexible from the tears of the little son she left to the tender mercies of the pretor. Did Mme. de Chantal recall these women, centuries after, when she walked serenely over the prostrate body of her son, who had thrown himself across the threshold to bar

her departure from her home to a life of spiritual consecration and conventual discipline under the direction of St. François de Sales?

We cannot follow the wanderings of these fourth-century pilgrims among the hermits of the desert and the holy places of Syria. They were among the first of a long line of women who have given up the luxuries and refinements of life for a hut or a cave in the wilderness, and a bare, hard existence, illuminated only by the "light that never was on sea or land." Melania established a convent on the Mount of Olives, with Rufinus as the spiritual director, and here it is probable that Paula visited her before settling finally near the Cave of the Nativity at Bethlehem, where she built three convents, a hospital, and a monastery, which was superintended by St. Jerome. It was here that the rich descendant of the Scipios, who had gone from a palace to a cell, gave herself to prayer and menial duties, while she scattered her fortune among the poor.

IV

THE most immediate and important outcome of the Church of the Household was this convent at Bethlehem, which had its origin in the brain of Paula and was managed by her until her death. The little community, with its austerities, its studies, its lowly duties, its charities, and its peaceful life, was clearly

visible while St. Jerome lived to electrify the world periodically with some fresh outburst of rage at its follies, or its presumption in differing in opinion from himself. It was here that he did his greatest work, and it is of special interest to us that he depended largely upon the intelligent aid of Paula and Eustochium in his revision of the Septuagint and the invaluable translation of the Bible known as the Latin Vulgate. His instructions to them were minute, and his confidence in their ability is shown in the preface to one of his works, where he says: "You, who are so familiar with Hebrew literature and so skilled in judging the merits of a translation, go over this one carefully, word by word, so as to discover where I have added or omitted anything which is not in the original." They also revised with him and largely settled the text of the Psalter which is in use to-day in the Latin churches. He said that they acquired with ease, and spoke perfectly, the Hebrew language, which had cost him so much labor. He was censured for dedicating so many of his works to the women who had given him such efficient help. His reply is of value, as it expressed the opinion of the most scholarly and brilliant of the early fathers on the intellectual ability of the sex which they seem, as a rule, to have taken the greatest pleasure in denouncing.

"As if these women were not more capable of forming a judgment upon them than most men,"

he says. "The good people who would have me prefer them to you, O Paula and Eustochium, know as little of their Bible as of Greek and Roman history. They do not know that Huldah prophesied when men were silent, that Deborah overcame the enemies of Israel when Barak trembled, that Judith and Esther saved the people of God. So much for the Hebrews. As for the Greeks, who does not know that Plato listened to the discourse of Aspasia, that Sappho held the lyre beside Alcæus and Pindar, that Themistia was one of the philosophers of Greece? And, among ourselves, Cornelia the mother of the Gracchi, Portia the daughter of Cato and wife of Brutus, before whom the virtue of the father and the austerity of the husband paled, do we not count them among the glories of Rome?"

Through the correspondence of these women with their friends, we have various glimpses of their life, as well as of the changes that came to the group on the Aventine. The heart of Paula was first saddened by the death of her daughter Paulina, who had married a brother of Marcella, and lived a life of great devotion in the world. Perhaps she found a grain of consolation in the fact that Paulina's large fortune was left to her husband to be distributed among the poor. We have a glowing account of the great funeral at St. Peter's, where this sorrowing husband scattered the gifts with his own hand

to the starving multitude, after turning his wife's jewels and fine, gold-embroidered robes into plain garments for the naked and needy. Then he went to his desolate home, took the vows of poverty, and put on a monk's cowl, though he still held his seat in the Senate, where he doubtless felt that he could render the best service.

This grief was tempered for Paula by the glad tidings that the little son she had left weeping on the shore had married Læta, a Christian, who, with his approval, consecrated their daughter, a second Paula, to the service of religion. It was the wife who wrote to her for direction as to her child's education; and we have an interesting letter from St. Jerome giving careful instruction on all points that concern the training of a young maiden. This Paula helped to cheer the last days of her grandmother, and became the third abbess of the convent.

Fabiola came once to visit them, and spent two years, entering into all their duties, and brightening the little community with her quick and eager intellect. But she died soon after her return to Rome. They urged Marcella to join them, and sent vivid descriptions of their idyllic life among the hills consecrated by so many sacred memories. "In summer we seek the shade of our trees," they write; "in autumn the mild weather and pure air invite us to rest on a bed of fallen leaves; in spring, when the fields are painted with flowers, we

sing our songs among the birds." To be sure, they had the hospital work, the menial duties, the prayers, and the penances, but they had, too, long and pleasant hours to study the holy books. Then they were free from the "need of seeing and being seen, of greeting and being greeted, of praising and detracting, hearing and talking, of seeing the crowds of the world." The monastery and the convent were quite separate, but it is likely that St. Jerome passed many moments in the converse of his friends and helpers, though his instructions were largely given by letter. These pastoral pictures, however, with their dark shadings, did not tempt the Roman lady from her chosen work. With her clear and sane intellect she saw her duty to those among whom she was born.

After seventeen years of unselfish labor for the poor and suffering, varied by the study of which we have the fruit, Paula died and was laid away in the grotto at Bethlehem. In her last moments she replied in Greek to a question of St. Jerome, that she felt no pain, and that everything before her was calm and tranquil. All Palestine flocked to her funeral, which was conducted by the Bishop of Jerusalem, and people of every rank and grade looked with tears on her grave and majestic features. "Illustrious by birth," says St. Jerome, "more illustrious by her piety, first in Rome by the wealth of her house, then more honored by Christian poverty,

she scorned pomp and glory, exchanged gilded walls for a cabin, and won the esteem of the entire world."

Her mantle fell upon Eustochium, an earnest, sincere woman of serious education but less strength and individuality than her mother, who filled her place with dignity and ability for sixteen years. In the first days of his grief St. Jerome was unable to take up his work, but this sympathetic helper turned his thoughts by carrying to him the Book of Ruth to be translated. At her death she was succeeded by her niece, another Paula, who had been long associated with her. The younger Melania, who had followed in the footsteps of her own grandmother, the first woman to leave Rome for an ascetic retreat in the East, was there also, and it was these women who, not long afterward, closed the eyes of St. Jerome, already dimmed with age.

But the close of Marcella's life came some time before this last light went out in the Syrian monastery, and it was tragical enough. For thirty years she had devoted herself and her large wealth to the unfortunate, and to the interests of the church she loved. During the siege of Alaric and the terrible days that saw the ruin of Rome, she was beaten and tortured to compel her to tell where she had hidden her treasures; but these had all gone for the relief of the suffering, and there was nothing to tell. A soldier with a kinder heart than the rest helped her

to reach the old Church of St. Paul without the walls, together with Principia, the only companion left to her, whom she had saved with great difficulty from the fury of her brutal captors. A few days later she died of these tortures, and the maiden was left alone to tell the tale. The Ecclesia Domestica appears no more in history. The little group of devoted women was already scattered. Many were dead. Some had found refuge in the convent at Bethlehem, some in the cells of the Thebaid, and some had gone to carry the seeds of their faith to remote places where we cannot trace them. Strictly speaking, this was never a convent, as there were no vows and women went in and out at pleasure. But it has been called the " Mother of Convents."

V

THE revolution effected in Roman society through these intelligent patrician matrons, whose names had great prestige, and whose wealth seems to have been inexhaustible, was a vital and important one. The women also show us, even in their often intemperate zeal, the magnificent possibilities of the Roman character. But their value to us lies largely in the results of the work they began, which expanded into the vast system of convents that soon overspread the known world. That these have been an unmixed good no one will contend to-day,

but that they fulfilled a mission which was, on the whole, a blessing in its time, few, I think, will deny. For centuries they furnished an outlet for the administrative talents as well as the surplus energies and emotions of women. They were also a refuge for multitudes who had no secure place in the world, and for those who did not wish to subject themselves to the slavery of a forced and loveless marriage. If they were not the best things possible, they were the best things available. So far as these women led lives of active charity, and forgot their own comfort in gentle ministrations to the poor and suffering, the results were good for themselves and the world. When they lost their poise in ecstatic visions, spent long hours in useless austerities and morbid introspection, crushing every natural impulse in the effort to attain an impossible holiness that was as airy and unsubstantial as the fabric of a dream, they became abnormal, and the results were distinctly bad; it was in the last analysis the apotheosis of emotionalism. The old extremes of sensuality were followed by equal extremes in another direction. To glorify pain, to neglect the person, to substitute states of exaltation for family ties, was a mark of piety. The movement started with an ideal of virgin purity that depreciated any life but that of a celibate. The immoralities that early began to creep in with the theories of spiritual marriage, even among the

cenobites of the desert, to the dismay of the fathers themselves, were doubtless due in part to the repression of tender human affections, and in part to the vow of obedience which placed pure and saintly women at the mercy of the wolves in sheep's clothing that speedily overran the church and the world.

The Christian ideals are essentially feminine ones. They exalt love, not force, and glorify the finest and most distinctive traits of womanhood. "Heavens, what wives these Christians have!" said a pagan ruler, struck with their spirit of supreme self-sacrifice. "Kill me," said Eve to Adam, as they were being driven from the Garden of Eden; "then perhaps God will put you back into paradise." So wrote a man centuries later who was trying to illustrate the unselfishness of woman at the crucial point of her history. But the obedience which was so beautiful to the husband was quite another matter when demanded by a spiritual director, and family life began to suffer. Perhaps this state of affairs is partly responsible for the bitter denunciations of women in the writings of the fathers, though by no means confined to them. "You are the devil's gateway," says Tertullian, "the unsealer of the forbidden tree, the deserter from the divine law. You persuaded him whom the devil was not brave enough to attack. You destroyed God's image, man." "Eve was the

principle of death," wrote St. Jerome; but remembering, perhaps, how far the work of his life had been aided by women, he adds that "Mary is the source of life." His attacks elsewhere are frequent and merciless. "Woman has the poison of an asp and the malice of a dragon," is the kindly tribute of Gregory the Great. "Of all wild beasts the most dangerous is woman," says St. Chrysostom, who owed so much to his own mother and loved her so devotedly. "It brings great shame to reflect of what nature woman is," writes Clement of Alexandria. One might fill a book with similar quotations. "A woman is an evil." "A woman is a whited sepulcher." This is the burden of priestly complaint from St. Augustine to the Protestant Calvin and John Knox, who sang variations on the same theme in a different key. Not even the classic Greeks were more abusive. All this is specially surprising, since we find no such spirit in the words of Christ, who was invariably gentle toward women and tender even to their faults. St. Paul was disposed to keep them in a very humble place, but, after all, he was never incurably bitter.

In spite of these persistent attacks, however, the church has availed itself, throughout its history, of the talents of great women, from the first St. Catherine to her namesake of Siena, from Marcella to the gifted St. Theresa and Mère Angélique, the thoughtful saint of Port-Royal. Women were

associated with all the humane movements of the primitive church. They held honorable and prominent positions as deaconesses, were intrusted with grave responsibilities, and venerated to an extent unheard of before. Salvina officially protected the Eastern churches, and supplications for favors were addressed to her on account of her ability and her influence at the court of the emperor. St. Chrysostom always spoke of Olympias, the ablest of his deaconesses, as his "dear and trusted friend." A rich woman, noble, and a widow, she had given up her life to the service of religion, and managed the affairs of the great archbishop, who depended upon her as St. Ambrose depended upon his sister Marcellina. When he was driven into exile, and the flames were bursting from St. Sophia, it was to her, not to the bishops, that he gave instructions for the government of his church in his absence, which was destined to be final.

It is worth while, perhaps, to quote a few lines from a letter written by this celebrated man to a Roman lady whose influence he asked in the interest of a general council. After a few generalities about the sphere of her sex, he continues: "But in the work which has the service of God for its object, in the church militant, these distinctions are effaced, and it often happens that the woman excels the man in the courage with which she supports her opinions and in her holy zeal. . . . Do not consider

as unbecoming to your sex that earnest work which in any way promotes the welfare of the faithful. . . . I beg you to undertake this with the utmost diligence; the more frightful the tempest, the more precious the recompense for your share in calming it."

There were a great many other able women, and some wicked ones, connected with the earlier movements of Christianity, especially in the Eastern Church, but they do not fall within the scope of this paper. I mention these few simply to show that it was by no means the emotional enthusiasm of women which gave them so much influence in a field for which they were peculiarly fitted, though this may account for much of their subsequent power over the masses, and many of their errors. Most of the leaders had great force of intellect and a special talent for organization.

The ultimate effect of conventual life on the minds of women is open to serious question. The founders of the movement were matrons of pagan education. The little circle on the Aventine, as we have seen, was versed in the knowledge of the time. But learning was already in its decline. About the time that Marcella was a victim to the barbarians who destroyed the glory of Rome, the last great feminine representative of the genius and culture of the classic world, the beautiful and gifted Hypatia, was dead in Alexandria, a sacrifice to the

mad passions of a fanatical mob that marched under the banner of One who came into the world with a message of peace and good will to men. Even the semi-mythical St. Catherine, the patron saint of science, philosophy, education, and eloquence, who lived not long before,—if at all,—was brought up on Plato and taught by pagan masters. So clear was the intellect of this prodigy of wisdom and knowledge that she was called upon to dispute with fifty of the most learned pagans, and, if the legends are to be trusted, vanquished them all on their own ground. The philosopher and the saint were trained in the same schools, and they were alike martyrs to their own learning and talents, though one was a partizan of the old order of things, the other of the new.

But those who followed them do not seem to have equaled the early women who were the product of pagan schools. Polite letters were discouraged, if not forbidden. St. Jerome himself mourns over the lost hours spent over Cicero and the poets, though, fortunately for his fame, he never wholly broke away from their influence. "What has Horace to do with the Psalter, or Vergil with the gospels, or Cicero with the apostles?" he said to Eustochium. No pursuit of secular knowledge was ever countenanced in the large bodies of women swayed by a spiritual director who would have burned Sappho and Euripides if he could,

and dominated by a visionary emotionalism turned out of its natural channels and centered on a single idea. Great ability asserted itself, not in learning, but in organization, leadership, and an ever-narrowing discipline.

The representative pagan woman had her shortcomings and her disabilities. She had also her virtues. If she had less of the spirit of religion, she had equally the spirit of patriotism, of culture, of honor, and of duty. There was a finer sensibility among the Christian women, and a stronger instinct of self-sacrifice. None of us will depreciate the beauty of those traits, but without the firmness of fiber that is fostered by trained intelligence, they have their dangers. When they mark the permanent attitude of one class toward another which in no wise recognizes any corresponding duty, they inevitably result in the servility of the one and the tyranny of the other. Such was the relative position of men and women in the dark ages. Even chivalry which paid a tribute to weakness was largely a theory, or a fashion that offered a new path to glory, and does not bear too close a scrutiny, though it tempered the condition of women and modified the character of men, upon whom it reflected great honor. Its ideals were fine, but the gulf between the ideal and its attainment in daily life was often a very wide one. There were conspicuous examples of feminine courage and hero-

ism as well as talent, but the lives of women in these ages were not, as a rule, pleasant ones, in spite of a certain halo of romance that was thrown about them. No doubt it was their suffering and helplessness that sent so many of them into convents where they frequently found a state of morals little better than the one from which they fled. It was not until the Renaissance brought back the old spirit of learning and a vigorous intellectual life among women that they combined the sweetness of Christian virtues with the dignity and strength born of knowledge and a measure of freedom, took the rightful position that belongs to the mothers of the race, and once more played a distinctly civilizing and beneficent rôle on the world's stage.

THE LEARNED WOMEN OF THE RENAISSANCE

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• Glorification of Women in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries •

• Their New Cult of Knowledge •

• Birisia Gozzadina •

• Ideals of the Early Poets •

• Dante • Petrarch • Boccaccio • Medieval Saints •

• Catherine of Siena • Women in Universities •

• Precocious Girls • Olympia Morata •

• Women Poets • Veronica Gambara •

• Vittoria Colonna •

• High Moral Tone of Literary Women •

• An Exception • Tullia d'Aragona •

THE LEARNED WOMEN OF THE RENAISSANCE

I

THERE was a curious book written early in the sixteenth century by a savant of Cologne, on "The Superiority of Women over Men." It was one out of many that were devoted to the glorification of the long-secluded sex, but its title serves to indicate the nature of the epidemic of eulogies that raged more or less for nearly two hundred years after Boccaccio set the fashion. This he did by singing the praises of the great heroines he brought out from the shadows of the past to adorn the pages of his "Illustrious Women." It seemed as if men had been struck with a sudden remorse for the unkind things they had been saying about women since the dawn of the world, and were trying to make amends by put-

ting them, theoretically at least, on a pinnacle of glory. Some celebrated their beauty, others their virtues, and still others their talents, while a few did not stop short of awarding them all the graces and perfections. Paul de Ribera published "The Immortal Triumphs and Heroic Enterprises of Eight Hundred and Forty-five Women," which was comprehensive if not convincing. Hilarion of Coste devoted two large volumes to eulogies of women of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, finding nearly two hundred to put into his Temple of Fame. What their special claims to glory may have been I do not know beyond the fact that they were pious and devout Catholics. One man who had contended for the equality of the sexes tried afterward to refute himself; but his recantation was half-hearted, as he confessed his private conviction that logic was against him.

Cardinal Pompeo Colonna takes it upon himself to demolish the old creed that a woman is an inferior creature, convenient in the house, but unfit for any large responsibility. He proves her capacity for public life by many examples, treats lightly the plea of the moral dangers that would beset her, and shows what men become when left to their own devices. After giving exalted praise to the masterful, accomplished women of his time, he cites his beautiful cousin, the "divine Vittoria," as a living model of talent and strength, as well as of

virtue, magnanimity, and devotion. More pointed and concise, though less definite, was Monti, a famous Roman prelate, who said: "If men complain of seeing themselves equaled or surpassed by women, so much the worse for them. It is because they are not worthy of their wives." The climax of praise was reached in a work written to prove that women are "nobler, braver, more tactful, more learned, more virtuous, and more economical than men." Such a pitch of adulation could hardly be maintained without a protest, and there were a few men ungallant enough to say that the best proof of their own sovereignty was the effort needed to combat it.

It is pleasant to record that the most ardent champions of feminine ability were men of more than ordinary caliber. As men rarely exaggerate the talents of women, though they sometimes make goddesses of them, we may safely conclude that their pictures were not overdrawn on that side. Truth, however, compels me to say that some of the eulogists were accomplished courtiers with special appreciation of queens and princesses who might make or mar their fortunes; also that this complaisance was by no means universal. Whether the satirists, novelists, and minor poets found the wicked more effective, from a dramatic point of view, than the good, as many of their successors do to-day, or the sensual age was more interested in

pretty sinners than in saints, it is certain that these writers paid scant honor to women, and delighted to put them in the worst light, though satire was in the main directed against the ignorant and the frivolous, not against the intelligent or the strong. Even Montaigne refused to look upon a woman otherwise than as a useful but inferior animal, though he inconsistently chose one of these "inferior animals" as his confidante and literary executor, because she was the "only person he knew in whose literary judgment he could confide." The scholarly Erasmus said she was "a foolish, silly creature, no doubt, but amusing and agreeable." He was happy in the belief that "the great end of her existence is to please men"; but he pays his own sex a poorer compliment than we should like to when he adds that "she could not do this without folly."

So much for the man's point of view. But the women were not silent, and a few glorified themselves as naïvely as some of their modern sisters have done. If we ever had any doubts as to our own modesty they ought to convince us of it. Lucrezia Marinelli, a clever Venetian and a poet, defined herself quite clearly in a work entitled "The Nobleness and Excellence of Women and the Faults and Imperfections of Men." As a comparison this seems rather unfair, but considering the fact that men had for ages given themselves all the noble

qualities and women all the weak ones, they could not take serious exception to it. Indeed, they evidently found it refreshing. It furnished them with a new sensation, and was quite harmless on the practical side, as they still held the reins of power. Marguerite of France, the brilliant and lettered wife of Henry IV, tried to prove that women are very superior to men, but, unfortunately, in her category of superiorities morals had no place. Mlle. de Gournay was more generous, as well as more just, and declared herself content with simple equality, though one cannot help wondering how she settled that matter with her friend Montaigne. But Mlle. Schurmann of Cologne thought that even this was going too far. It seems as if she might fairly have claimed to be the peer of the average man, since she spoke nine languages and was more or less noted as painter, musician, sculptor, engraver, philosopher, mathematician, and theologian. Just how much solid learning was implied in this formidable list of accomplishments we cannot judge, but it is clear that there has been a time before to-day when women aimed to know everything, though there was a safeguard against shattered nerves in the fact that there were not so many books to read nor so many brain-splitting problems to solve. It is fair, however, to suppose that this learned lady did not waste much time on clothes or five-o'clock teas. Louise Labé, the poet

and savante of Lyons, takes a more modern tone. In claiming intellectual equality for women, she begs them not to permit themselves to be despoiled of the "honest liberty so painfully won—the liberty of knowing, thinking, working, shining." In spite of her courageous words, however, this paragon of so many talents and virtues, the glory of her sex and the pride of her city, asserts herself in a half-deprecating way, as if she were asking pardon for presuming to publish her little verses, and shelters herself behind the admiring friends who are willing to "take half the shame." But she was a Frenchwoman, and her day was not yet. Women had so long hidden their light, if they had any, that it blinked perceptibly when exposed to the winds of heaven or the more chilly breezes of masculine criticism.

It is needless to extend the list of writers on this subject, but it is a long and remarkable one. The books would make rather interesting reading to-day, whatever we might think of their quality, as problems familiar to us were pretty thoroughly if not always ably discussed, and apparently with great good nature. A distinguished Frenchman, well known in the salons of the eighteenth century, unearthed a great many curious facts and opinions hidden away in these books, which are now mostly buried too deep in the dust of old libraries for resurrection, and his own wise and quite modern

conclusions entitled him to more consideration than he received from the women of his time. But this rapid glimpse will suffice, perhaps, to show the spirit in which latter-day questions were treated four or five centuries ago; also to throw a strong light on the position of women during the period, without very precise limits, known as the Renaissance—a period of special interest to us, as it marks the dawn of a new era of feminine intelligence.

II

WE do not know how it happened that Bitisia Gozzadina stepped out of the traditional seclusion of her sex as early as the benighted thirteenth century, to be made doctor of civil and canon law in the University of Bologna at the age of twenty-seven. She had already pronounced a funeral oration in Latin and otherwise distinguished herself several years before. It is no longer the fashion to give Latin orations outside of the universities, but we know how women fared a few decades ago, when they tried to speak publicly in their own language. It was perfectly understood that women of such oratorical proclivities forfeited all right to social consideration. They were practically ostracized. Happily, now they are treated about as well as they were six hundred years ago, when people crowded the university halls and even

the public squares to listen to this remarkable woman. We do not hear that she was called any disagreeable names, not even a bas-bleu, though there is a vague tradition that she had peculiar notions about dress. It is said that she had rare beauty, but her charm and esprit made people forget it.

There is nothing in the medieval ideals of womanhood to suggest such a phenomenon, still less its cordial acceptance. Not even in the early poets is there a trace of the type of woman which played so distinguished a part in the golden age of the Renaissance. Beatrice was little more than a beautiful abstraction, the spiritual ideal of a man who dwelt mainly upon other-worldly matters. Petrarch found it interesting to kneel before Madonna Laura in the clouds, and sing hymns in her praise; but she was only an elusive figure on which to drape poetic fancies. In these days, when it is quite the fashion to pull the halos from the saints and put them on the sinners,—when even the wicked Lucrezia Borgia has become a respectable wife and a particularly good mother, who expiated the sins of her youth, if she had any, by her pious devotion, her kindness to the poor, and her patronage of art and literature,—it is not surprising to hear that Laura was a commonplace matron, "fair, fat, and forty," who would have found it difficult to live up to the ideals of her adorer,—even if she had known what they were,—

and prudently kept out of so rarefied an air. This blending of chivalry and mysticism made fine poetry but not very substantial women.

Boccaccio paid a generous tribute to the heroic qualities of the women of the past, but he evidently preferred them at a distance or in books. Personally he seems to have had no more taste for savantes than for saints. He belonged to the new age, which glorified the joys of life and liked to sing love-songs—not of the choicest—to frail beauties. Fiammetta was, no doubt, a clever woman and a beautiful one, but she was no divine Egeria to inspire him with high thoughts. If he did brilliant things at her bidding, the trail of the serpent was over them all. Perhaps he aimed to suit the taste of the day, which was neither delicate nor moral; or he may have lived in bad company from which he took his models. We should be sorry to take as representative the heroines of the Decameron, who must have brought blushes, which the twilight could not hide, to the faces of the little coterie of friends that sat on the grass telling or listening to these tales during the long summer evenings at Florence, when men and women were dying all about them. But they give us one phase of the life of the time, and reflect the taste of an audience composed mainly of men who laughed at morals and deified art, regardless of its aim or its subject. The age was not strait-laced, but Italian

ladies were not permitted to read Boccaccio. One story, however, they might read. When the poet wished to portray a good woman, for a change, he made a fine little picture of Griselda, the patient, who was duly thankful for every indignity her amiable lord chose to offer, mainly because she thought her sufferings made him happy. When these incredible cruelties culminated in sending her away loaded with unmerited disgrace, she still thanked him like a good wife who was grateful for being trampled upon, even when her innocent heart was breaking. It was a fine object-lesson for the proper education of girls, and this marvel of self-sacrifice was held up from one end of Europe to the other as a model of womanhood. Poets painted her over and over again, with race variations; moralists praised her; and men quoted her to their wives. Some instinct of justice prompted Boccaccio to reward her in the end for all this useless misery, which was simply a test of her servile quality, by putting her again, after a series of years, into the good graces of her inhuman husband; but it is needless to say that such rewards of virtue, if they could be considered rewards, are not in the way of a world in which these lessons are read.

All this shows how far the heroines of the early poets, whether good or bad, differed from the strong, able, and accomplished women who were recognized as the glories of the Renaissance. It

suggests also the lurid or colorless background against which the latter were outlined. The cynical bachelor in Molière's comedy summed up the whole duty of woman according to the gospel of the middle ages—and, it might be added, of many other ages—when he said that his wife must know only how to "pray to God, love, sew, and spin." The last three qualifications were necessary for his own comfort, and he had the penetration to divine that she might have ample need of the first on her own account. Then it gave him an agreeable sense of security to have a certain proprietorship in some one mildly affiliated with the next world. "In thy orisons be all my sins remembered," says Hamlet to the fair Ophelia. A man might be the worst of sinners himself, but he liked a seasoning of piety in his wife, provided it was not too aggressive and left him free to be wicked if he chose. It was like having an altar in the home, and gave it a desirable flavor of saintliness.

Beyond the fireside and the docile domestic slave, however, there was another medieval ideal of womanhood, a *religieuse* who prayed and sang hymns in the cloister. Aside from this, it was her special mission to help the poor, care for the sick, console the sorrowful, and advance the interests of the church. But these women of the cloister, who had the altar without the home, found a possible outlet for their imprisoned intellects, if they had sufficient

natural force. The Roman Church, which had always frowned upon any exercise of a woman's mental gifts in a worldly sphere, was glad to avail itself of them in its own interest, and there were a few women more or less distinguished both as leaders of religious organizations and counselors of ecclesiastics, who kept alive the prestige of their sex through centuries of darkness. It was one of the strange paradoxes of that age, as of many others, that a woman is an irrational being, too fragile to bear distinction of any sort, except when her talents make for the glory of men or the church. Activity in public affairs, so long as they were religious ones, was not considered unwomanly, notwithstanding the conservative opinions of St. Paul. No one took it amiss when Catherine of Siena used her wisdom and eloquence in persuading the Pope to return from Avignon to Rome after men's counsels had failed. No one found fault because her emotional exaltation was tempered by a vigorous intellect. She was a thinker and seer, and wrote ably on political as well as ecclesiastical questions. Her style was simple and classic; indeed, she was altogether phenomenal, and had strange influence over the popes and kings to whom she did not hesitate to tell unpleasant truths. It was quite fitting that she should devote these gifts to the interests of her church and incidentally of her country. Men honored her for it, and canonized her.

This was a hundred and fifty years or so before the beautiful Isabella of Cordova, who was more learned and less mystical, gave up mundane pleasures for the classics and a degree in theology; and Isabella Rosera devoted herself to the conversion of the Jews, dazzled multitudes with her eloquence in the cathedral at Barcelona, and expounded the subtleties of Duns Scotus before prelates and cardinals at Rome. But in that interval women had made great strides in intelligence, and the talents that shone so conspicuously in great moral and religious movements had become a powerful factor in other directions. Bitisia Gozzadina had multitudes of successors to her honors.

III

THAT women emerged so suddenly from a state of ignorance, superstition, and mystic dreams to a position of intellectual distinction and virtual though not legal equality with men, is one of the marvels of the Renaissance. The change was as rapid and complete as that which came over the women of the nineteenth century. It is scarcely less remarkable, in the light of our own experience, that their new-born passion for learning met with so little opposition. They did not find it necessary to fight their own battles. There was no question of asserting their right to the higher education, as we have

been forced to do. This was taken as a matter of course and without controversy. They were educated on equal lines with men, and by the same masters; nor were the most distinguished teachers of the age afraid of being enervated by this contact with the feminine mind, as certain modern professors claim to be. Doubtless they would have smiled at such a reflection on their own mental vigor.

One is constantly surprised by the extraordinary precocity of the young girls. Cecilia, the daughter of an early Marquis of Mantua, was trained with her brothers by the most famous master in Italy, and wrote Greek with singular purity at ten. She refused a brilliant but distasteful marriage, and devoted her life to literature. The little Battista, whose talents descended to her illustrious granddaughter, Vittoria Colonna, was chosen, at an age when girls are usually playing with dolls or learning their letters, to greet Pius II in a Latin address. Anna d'Este, who became the wife of the Duke of Guise, and in later life was so prominent a patroness of letters in France, translated Italian into Latin with ease at ten, and was otherwise a prodigy. One might imagine these children to have been insufferable little prigs, but such does not seem to have been the case. So far as we can learn, they did not lose their simplicity, and grew up to be capable, many-sided, and charming women,

quite free from pedantry or affectation of any sort. Without attaching too much importance to these childish efforts, which were by no means uncommon, they are of value mainly in showing the care given to the serious education of girls.

It is certain that the place held by educated women was a new and exceptional one. They filled chairs of philosophy and law, discoursed in Latin before bishops and cardinals, spoke half a dozen or more languages, understood the mysteries of statecraft better than any of us do to-day, and were consulted on public affairs by the greatest sovereigns of their age. Nor do we hear that they were unsexed or out of their sphere. On the contrary, men recognized their talents and gave them cordial appreciation. While the shafts of satire fell thick and fast upon the follies peculiar to ignorance and weakness, they were rarely aimed at those who, even to-day, would be more or less stigmatized as strong-minded. Possibly a clue to this may be found in the fact that in training the intellect they did not lose their distinctive virtues and graces; they simply added the cult of knowledge, which heightened all other charms. We find constant reference to their attractions of person and character, as well as of mind. Novella d'Andrea took her father's place in his absence and lectured on jurisprudence at the University of Bologna; but, either from modesty or from the fear of distracting

the too susceptible students, she hid her lovely face behind a curtain. At a later time Elena Cornaro —who was not only versed in mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, theology, and six languages, but sang her own verses, gave Latin eulogies, and lectured on various sciences—was crowned doctor of philosophy at Padua. She took her honors modestly, and is said to have been as pious as she was learned.

In these days of specialties one looks with distrust on so formidable an array of accomplishments. We are apt to think of such women as either hopelessly superficial, or pedants without any fine human quality. A few salient points from the life of one of the most distinguished may serve to correct this impression.

IV

OLYMPIA MORATA deserves, for her own sake, more than a passing mention. She was by no means a simple receptacle of heterogeneous knowledge, but a woman as noted for feminine virtues and strength of character as for the brilliancy of her intellect. Her father was a distinguished professor in the University of Ferrara, and his gifted daughter was fed from infancy on the classics. At six she was taught by a learned canon who advised her parents to put a pen in her hand instead of a needle. At twelve she was well versed in

Greek, Latin, and the sciences of the day, petted and flattered by scholars old and young, compared to the Muses and to all the feminine stars of antiquity, and in the way of being altogether spoiled. In the midst of this chorus of praise she donned the habit of a professor at sixteen, wrote dialogues in the language of Vergil and Plato, a Greek essay on the Stoics, and many poems. She also lectured without notes at the academy, before the court and the university dons, on such themes as the paradoxes of Cicero, speaking in Latin, and improvising at pleasure with perfect ease. The great Roman orator was her model of style, and in a preface to one of her lectures she says: "I come to my task as an unskilled artist who can make nothing of a coarse-grained marble. But if you offer a block of Parian to his chisel, he will no longer deem his work useless. The beauty of the material will give value to his production. Perhaps it will be so with mine. There are some tunes so full of melody that they retain their sweetness even when played upon a poor instrument. Such are the words of my author. In passing through my lips they will lose nothing of their grace and majesty."

This brilliant and classical maiden passed eight or ten years of her youth at the court of Ferrara in intimate companionship with Anna d'Este and her mother, the "wise, witty, and virtuous" Duchess Renée. These were the days when the latter had

Bernardo Tasso, a fashionable poet who was eclipsed by his greater son, for her private secretary, and delighted to fill her apartments with men of learning. The little Anna, too, a child of ten, had been brought up on the classics, and the two girls, who studied Greek together, liked to talk of Plato, Apollo, and the Muses much better than to gossip about dress and society, or the gallants of the court. Even their diversions had a pagan flavor. When Paul III came on a visit, the royal children played a comedy of Terence to entertain his eighteen cardinals and forty bishops, with all the magnates and great ladies that usually grace such festivities. It is quite probable that the clever Olympia had much to do in directing it.

The literary academy of the duchess had a singular fascination for the gifted young girl, who was one of its brightest ornaments. "Her enthusiasm over antiquity became an idolatry, and badly prepared her intellect for the doctrines of grace," wrote one of her friends. "She loved better the wisdom of Homer and Plato than the foolishness of St. Paul." She says of herself that she was full of the vanities of her sex, though it is difficult to conceive of this worshiper of poets and philosophers as very frivolous. That she had many attractions is certain, as she won all hearts. "Thy face is not only beautiful and thy grace charming," said one of the great scholars of the time, "but thou hast been

elevated to the court by thy virtues. . . . Happy the princess who has such a companion! Happy the parents of such a child, who pronounce thy beautiful name within their doors! Blessed the husband who shall win thy hand!"

But this sunny life could not go on forever. The "Tenth Muse" was called home to care for her father in his last illness, and proved as capable in the qualities of a nurse as in those of a muse. At his death the little family was left to her care. To make the prospect darker, her friend Anna d'Este had just married and gone off to her brilliant but not altogether smooth career in France, and the duchess gave her a chilling reception that boded no good; indeed, night had overtaken her, and she found herself cruelly dismissed in her hour of sorrow and trouble.

Other subjects had been discussed in this literary circle besides Greek poetry and Ariosto and the courtly Bembo and the rising stars of the day. Calvin had been there in disguise, and they had talked of free will, predestination, and like heresies, much to the discomfiture of the orthodox duke, whose interests did not lie in that direction. The young savante had listened to these things, and her eager mind had pondered on them. Perhaps, too, she was one of the group that discussed high and grave themes when Vittoria Colonna was there. At all events, the duchess had fallen into disgrace

for her Protestant leanings, and could do no more for her favorite, who was branded with a suspicion of the same heresy. Indeed, she was herself confined for a time to one wing of the palace and forbidden to see her children lest she should contaminate them with her own liberal views. The only powerful friend left to the desolate girl in her adversity was Lavinia della Rovere of the ducal family of Urbino, who had shared her tastes, sympathized with her views in happier times, and now proved her loyalty in various ways that sustained her drooping heart. But there was another, equally helpful if not so powerful, a young German of good family, who had been a medical student in the university, and fallen in love with this paragon of learning and accomplishments. He was true when others fell away, and she gave him the devotion of her life. Both were under the same ban, and soon after their marriage fled to Germany, with the blessing of Lavinia and some valuable letters to her friends.

It was a strange series of misfortunes that pursued this brave couple. After drifting about in the vain search for a foothold in an unsympathetic world, where they could think their own thoughts and satisfy their modest wants, they found at last a home in which they set up their household gods and gathered their few treasures with their much-loved books. But when kings fall out other people

suffer. No sooner were they settled than the small city was besieged, and for many months they went through all the horrors of war, famine, pestilence, and, in the end, fire, which destroyed their small possessions, and compelled them to flee for their lives through a hostile country, scantily clothed, unprotected, and penniless.

It is needless to follow their dark wanderings. Suffice it to say that they found refuge at last in Heidelberg, where the husband was given a professorship, and the wife, too, was offered the chair of Greek, which she was never able to take. Her health had succumbed to her many sufferings and hardships, and she died before she was twenty-nine. But her strong soul rose above them all. "I am happy—entirely happy," she said at the close. "I have never known a spirit so bright and fair, or a disposition so amiable and upright," wrote her husband, who could not survive her loss and followed her within a few months.

There is more than the many-colored tissue of a life as sad as it was brilliant in these records. They carry within them all the possibilities of a strong and symmetrical womanhood. The rare quality of her scholarship was never questioned. She was the admitted peer of the most learned men of her time, one of whom expects her to "produce something worthy of Sophocles." But she was clever, winning, and fascinating, as well as serious. Living for years

among the gaieties of a court, she went out into a world of storms and gloom without a murmur or a regret, buoyed up by her love and unquestioning faith. She refers more to the joys than to the sorrows of this tempestuous time. Lavinia and the Duchess of Guise, the friends of her youth, were true to the end. In her letters to them and to the learned men who never lost sight of her, we have curious glimpses of the home of a woman who was a disciple of the Muses and a savante of intrinsic quality. While her husband prepares his lectures, she puts the house in order, buys furniture, and manages servants who were about as troublesome as they are to-day. One asks a florin a month, and reserves a part of the time for her own profit. Others insist upon staying out late and running in the streets. Most of them are grossly incompetent. Poor as she is, she is always ready to help those who are in greater need, and is constantly imposed upon. She even borrows money to send to an old servant in distress.

Then there are the evenings when grave professors come in, and they talk in Latin of the affairs of the day, the religious persecutions, or some disputed dogma. Sometimes they sing one of her Greek psalms which her husband has set to music. She has her heart full with the care of her young brother and the little daughter of a friend, who has been sent to her for instruction. But her life is

bound up in that of her husband, whom she "cannot live without." A pure and generous spirit, happy in her sacrifices, and true to every relation, she is a living refutation of the fallacy, too often heard even now, that learning and the gentler qualities of womanhood do not go together.

There were many other women of great distinction in the universities, whose names still live in enduring characters after four or five centuries—professors, and wives of professors who worked side by side with their husbands, and received their due meed of consideration. We have women of fine scholarly attainments to-day, though in the great universities they are mostly relegated to the anterooms and honored with second-class degrees; but fancy the consternation of the students of Harvard or Oxford if asked to listen to the lecture of a woman on law or philosophy, or, indeed, on any subject whatever! Yet there were great men and great scholars in Italy, possibly too great to fear competition. Society was in no sense upset, and, so far as women were concerned, the harmony of creation was not interfered with. Indeed, the best mothers and the most devoted, helpful wives in Italy of whom we have any knowledge were among the women who spoke Latin, read Greek, and worshiped at the shrine of the Muses — all of which may be commended to the college girls of to-day as well as to their critics.

THE LEARNED WOMEN

V

IN other fields there were equally accomplished women. Cassandra Fidelis was the pride and glory of Venice in the days when Titian walked along the shores of the Adriatic, absorbing the luminous tints of sea and sky, and picturing to himself the faces that look out upon us to-day from the buried centuries, instinct with color and the fullness of life. Poet and philosopher, she wrote in many languages, even spoke publicly at Padua. She caught, too, the spirit of beauty and song, and was as noted for her music and her graceful manners as for her learning. Men of letters paid court to her, Leo X wrote to her, and Ferdinand tried to draw her to Naples; but the Doge refused to part with this model of so many gifts and virtues. She lived a century divided between literature and piety, but drifted at last, in her widowhood, to the refuge of so many tired souls, and ended her brilliant career in a convent.

This remarkable flowering of the feminine intellect was not confined to Italy. Besides the noted Spanish women already mentioned, there were celebrated professors of rhetoric in the universities of Alcala and Salamanca. Even more distinguished was Aloysia Sigea, a poet and savante of Toledo, who surprised Paul III with a letter in five languages, which he was able to answer in only three.

Just why she found it necessary to put what she had to say in five languages, instead of one, does not appear, but she proved her right to be considered a prodigy. Her fame was great, and she died young.

Frenchwomen were less serious and made a stronger point of the arts of pleasing. They approached literature with the air of a dilettante, who finds in it an amusement or accomplishment rather than a passion or an aim. At a later period they brought to its height a society based upon talent and the less tangible quality of esprit. But we have the virile intellect and versatile knowledge of the Renaissance in Mlle. de Gournay, who aspired to the highest things, including the perfection of friendship, which she said her sex had never been able to reach; and the famous Marguerite, the witty, learned, independent, and original sister of Francis I, who aimed at all knowledge, and tried her hand at everything from writing verses and tales, patronizing letters, and gathering a society of philosophers and poets, to reforming religion and ruling a state.

In England we find Lady Jane Grey at sixteen a mistress of many languages and preferring Plato to a hunting-party; the Seymour sisters, who were familiar with the sciences and wrote Latin verses; the daughters of Sir Thomas More, whose talents and accomplishments were only surpassed by their

virtues; and many others, by no means least Queen Elizabeth herself, whose attainments were overshadowed by her genius of administration. The taste for knowledge was widely spread, and it would take us far beyond the limits of this essay to recall the women of many countries who were noted for learning and gifts that must always be relatively rare in any age, though pretenders may be as numerous as parrots in a tropical forest.

But it is mainly the women of Italy, where this movement had its birth, that we are considering here, and their talents were not confined to the acquisition of knowledge. There were many poets among them. To be sure, we find no Dante, or Petrarch, or Ariosto, or Tasso. Of creative genius there was very little; of taste and skill and poetic feeling there was a great deal. Domenichi made a collection of fifty women poets who compared well with the average men of their time and far surpassed them in refinement and moral purity. In their new enthusiasm for things of the intellect, they never lost their simplicity of faith, and were infected little, if at all, with the cynical skepticism of the age. Some of these numerous poets were connected with the universities, others belonged to the great world, and still others were women of moderate station, who were honored at the various courts for their gifts of mind.

No doubt much of this poetry was mediocre.

Indeed, men, aside from the greatest, wrote very little that one now cares to read. It is a truism that "poets are born, not made," and they are not born very often. But the work of women which was not even of the best received high consideration. Tarquinia Molza, a maid of honor at Ferrara,—who held public discussions with Tasso, wrote sonnets and epigrams, and translated the dialogues of Plato, —was so celebrated for her learning and poetic gifts that the Senate of Rome conferred upon her the title of Roman Citizen. Laura Battiferri, one of the ornaments of the court of Urbino, was spoken of as a rival of Sappho in genius and her superior in modesty and decorum. She was an honored member of the Academy of the Intronati at Siena. There were no women's clubs in those days. They were not needed when women were admitted to many of the academies on equal terms with men. The number may have been small, but evidently the way was clear. They were barred, if at all, by incapacity, not by sex.

One of the most celebrated of these numerous poets was Veronica Gambara, Countess of Correggio, a woman of fine gifts, many virtues, and great personal charm, who was left a widow after nine happy years of marriage. Like her friend Vittoria Colonna, she spent the rest of her life in mourning her husband, draping herself, her apartments, and everything she had in black, and refusing all offers

of a second marriage. But this sable grief did not prevent her from managing her affairs, her little state, and her two sons, both of whom reached high positions, with great judgment and ability. Her husband had trusted her implicitly, and left her in full control at his death. It was largely to his memory that she devoted her poetic gifts. She did not write a great deal, but her verses were simple and showed masculine vigor. Many of them were tender, though by no means sentimental. She wrote on the vanity of earthly things, a subject on which women have always been specially eloquent, as they have so often written out of their own sad experience. Her home at Bologna was a sort of academy, where the most distinguished men of the age met, and it was noted as a center of brilliant conversation. One of its chief attractions was Cardinal Bembo, a lifelong friend, to whom she addressed a sonnet at ten. Philosopher, high priest of Platonism, critic, poet, and man of the world, this famous cardinal paid the highest tributes to the distinguished women of his time. Intellectually he lived in an air that was somewhat tenuous, but he sought the society of those who loved things of the spirit—especially princesses. It was a convenient fashion among these diplomats and churchmen to have two lives—one poetic, Platonic, with ecstatic glimpses of the celestial, the other running through various grades of the terrestrial. The versatile

Bembo was no exception. Veronica Gambara, who combined grace and delicacy with a distinctly mundane vigor, sat metaphorically at his feet, and was an ardent disciple of the new Platonic philosophy. She had natural eloquence, and gave a charm to the serious discussions at her house. Among her noted visitors was Charles V, who was fascinated by her talents and gracious manners. She reproached him and Francis I with the quarrels that had flooded Europe with tears, and wrote him a poem fired with patriotic ardor, in which she asks peace for Italy and protection against the infidel. In her poetry and her letters she followed Petrarch. Without commanding genius, and less mystical than Vittoria Colonna, but with possibly more strength in a limited range, she was greatly considered for her learning, her poetry, her social graces, her practical ability, and her spotless character.

These are a few out of a multitude of poets and savantes who are of little interest to-day, except as showing the notable attainments of women in a new field and the drift of public sentiment regarding them.

VI

THERE is one, however, who calls for more attention, not only because of her enduring fame, but because she stood in a light so strong as to make her, even at this distance, a living personality to us;

also because she represents the best phases of the Renaissance, its learning, its intelligence, its enthusiasm, its subtle Platonism, combined with a profound religious faith and a trace of the mysticism of a simpler age. We are apt to recall Vittoria Colonna as half poet, half saint. Her spiritual face looks out of a century of vice and license, crowned with the delicate halo of a Madonna brooding tenderly over the sins of the world in which she lives with an air of apartness, as if she were in it but not of it. Whether we see her under the soft skies of Ischia, happy and a bride, or seeking solace among its orange-scented groves for the lost joys of her youth; at Naples, holding a lettered court with the beautiful and accomplished Giulia Gonzaga; at Rome, talking on high themes with a group of serious and thoughtful men in the cool shadows of the Colonna gardens; at Ferrara, discussing the new thought, receiving the homage of a distinguished circle, and generously using her great name to shield the persecuted and unhappy; or kneeling at prayers and chanting Misereres in the cloisters where, at intervals, she hid a sorrowful heart—there is always the same flavor of purity and saintliness in her character and personality as in her genius.

The romance of her life is well known. She was born in 1490,—just before Lorenzo de' Medici died and Savonarola expiated the crime of being too good for his time,—in a gloomy old Colonna castle

that towers picturesquely above the rambling, medieval town of Marino among the Alban hills. But she did not stay there long, as she was betrothed at four to the Marquis of Pescara, and, for some inexplicable reason, sent away to the sunny island of Ischia to be educated with him by his sister Costanza d'Avalos, Duchess of Francavilla, a woman so noted for wisdom, ability, and virtue that she was made governor, or châtelaine, of the island at her husband's death. For once, this commercial arrangement proved a fortunate one, as the brilliant duchess was as famous for her culture and the lettered society gathered about her as for her practical talent in ruling. The gifted child grew up among poets and men of learning, with her future lord as her playmate and a woman of intellect as her guide. Add to this the changing splendors of sea and sky, the haunting memories of the beautiful shore that curves away from the headlands of Misenum to the Isles of the Sirens, the repose broken only by the cool dripping of fountains, the plashing of the indolent waves on the beach, and the plaintive songs of the boatmen floating at evening across the tranquil water to find a sweet refrain in the music of the vesper bell—and we have the *milieu* of the poet. There were royal festivities when the king came to break the monotony of the days, occasional glimpses of the magnificent court pageants at Naples, and rare visits to the somber

ancestral home on the Alban Lake. But the mind of the thoughtful maiden was more in harmony with the quiet scenes among which most of her days were passed, and had taken its permanent tone when the youthful lovers were married at about eighteen, or possibly nineteen.

Two or three years of unclouded happiness, and this idyllic life came to an end. The marquis was called to the army, and the devoted wife saw him only at long intervals during his brilliant career, which he closed some fifteen years later with a tarnished name. The blow that shattered the hopes of Vittoria came near costing her life. In the first agony of her grief she fled to a convent, and wished to take the veil of a nun; but she was too valuable in her own sphere to be lost to the world, and Clement VII forbade it. Her only resource was to consecrate herself to the memory of one she never ceased to call *mio bel sole*, to religion, and to matters of the intellect.

How she reconciled her undying love with the faithless and treacherous character of her Spanish husband, who was willing to sell his loyalty for a kingdom, we do not know. That she was ignorant of his disgrace is not probable. She had given him high counsel, putting honor and virtue above titles and worldly grandeur, and saying that she had no wish to be the wife of a king, since she is already the wife of a captain who has vanquished kings, not

only by his bravery, but by his magnanimity. But she had, to a marked degree, the fine idealism that gives vitality to a sentiment. It is shown in the poise of the shapely head, in the broad, high, speculative forehead that hid a wealth of imagination and exalted feeling, in the large, soft, penetrating dark eyes, lighted with sensibility, which relieved the delicately chiseled features and firm but beautiful mouth from a tinge of asceticism. She was tall, stately, and graceful, with a fair, variable face of pure outlines, and hair of Titian gold. Her picture is one of a rare woman, capable of high thought, great generosity, great sacrifice, and great devotion. This love of her youth was interwoven with every fiber of her being. The child with whom she had wandered hand in hand by the sea; the youth who had responded to her every taste and thought, poetic like herself, proud, accomplished, handsome, and knightly; the man who had whiled away the hours of his captivity in writing for her a rather stilted Dialogue of Love, were alike transfigured in her memory. If she heard that he was a traitor, probably she did not believe it, and the very fact of unmerited disgrace would have been an added claim upon her affection. She was young, and naturally slow to think that an act which Pope and cardinals had assured him was quite consistent with the finest honor could be treasonable at all, though she had a keen moral sense that led her straight to the heart of

things. Then the harshness and cruelty for which he was noted belonged to the exigencies of war, which is never merciful. It was easy to malign him there. At all events, it is certain that the faults of this brilliant cavalier of very flexible honor were swept away in a flood of happy memories and imperishable love. Many were the suitors who presented themselves to the gifted, rich, and beautiful princess, who was scarcely past thirty-five; but she had gathered the wealth of her affections in a vase that was broken, and for her there was no second gathering. The spirit that held captive her own still shone in the heavens as a sun that lighted the inner temple of her soul and made its hidden treasures luminous.

When she rallied a little from the first stunning blow, she began to write. This had been one of the diversions of her youth, and she had often sent tender verses to her husband. Now it offered an outlet to her sorrows, and, at the same time, a tribute to his memory. Never was such a monument dedicated to a man as this series of more than a hundred sonnets. Her love colored all her thoughts, and gave to her clear, strong intellect a living touch that comes only from the heart. If one misses in these verses the fire of Sappho, one is conscious of coming in contact with a pure and lofty soul in which earthly passion has been transformed into a glow of divine tenderness. But the note of

longing and loneliness is always there. Laura was no more idealized by her poet lover than was this unworthy man by his desolate wife. For seven years her poems were a series of variations on the same theme. The sun shone no longer for her; there was no more beauty in tree, or flower, or sparkling waves; the birds were mute, and nature was draped in gloom. In death only there was hope; but even here was the dreadful possibility that she might not be perfect enough to meet this paragon of all noble qualities in heaven. So Mrs. Browning might have written. She had the same tendency to transfigure her idols in the light of the imagination, the same meditative quality, the same fine idealism. But she lived and died a happy wife, while her sister poet spent lonely years in the companionship of a memory.

Time, however, which tempers all things, if it does not change them, brought a new element into her thoughts, and her elegiac songs rose to cathedral hymns. In her religious sonnets she reveals the intrinsic quality of her mind and its firm grasp of spiritual things. Some of them touch on forbidden questions, and wander among the dangerous heresies of the new age. Theology and poetry are not quite in accord, and these are of value mainly as showing the liberal drift of her opinions. Others are the spontaneous outpouring of a full and ardent soul. Rich in thought, alive with feeling, and lighted with

hope, they soar on the wings of an exalted faith far above the heavy and sin-laden air of her time.

> And, as the light streams gently from above,
> Sin's gloomy mantle bursts its bonds in twain,
> And robed in white, I seem to feel again
> The first sweet sense of innocence and love.

This gentle-hearted poet was a purist in style, and chiseled carefully the vase in which she put her thoughts, not for the sake of the vase, but reverently, to make it worthy of the thought. These hymns fall upon the ear like some thrilling strain from Palestrina, who translated into song the dreams, the aspirations, the baffled hopes, the sorrows of a race in its decline, and sent it along the centuries with its everlasting message of love and consolation. There was something akin in the two spirits that lived at the same time, though Palestrina was young when the poet neared the evening. It was he who first gave to music a living soul. Vittoria gave the world its first collection of religious poems, and poured her own heart into them. Both vibrated to the deepest note of their age. Only the arts differed, and the quality of thought, and the outer vestments of life.

But we are far from the days when this beautiful woman in her magnificent robes of crimson velvet and gold, attended by six ladies in azure damask and as many grooms in blue and yellow satin, was

one of the central figures in some royal wedding festivities at Naples. Mundane pleasures had long ago lost their charm, and the still lovely poet in her sable costume finds her consolation in ministering to the poor and suffering, and in an active interest in all the intellectual movements of her time. She was the friend of great men and distinguished women. Cardinal Bembo, the famous "dictator of letters," lauds her virtues and her genius while he craves her favor. She writes of the gifts of her "divine Bembo," addresses sonnets to him, and receives his "celestial, holy, and very Platonic" affection with gracious dignity. Castiglione sends her his manuscript of "Il Cortegiano" for criticism, and complains that she held it too long and copied it for other eyes. She gives discriminating praise of the "subject as well as the tact, elegance, and animation of the style," but she suggests the wisdom of dwelling less persistently on the beauty and virtue of living women. The unscrupulous but keen-witted Aretino pays her compliments and begs her aid. "One must count with the tastes of one's contemporaries," he writes, in half-apology for his own base standards; "only amusement or scandal are lucrative; they burn with unholy passions, as you do with an inextinguishable angelic flame. Sermons and vespers for you, music and comedy for others. . . . Why write serious books? After all, I write to live." This was the note of the new

age in an ever-descending scale—the death-knell of all that is fine and noble in any age. It is needless to ask what this high-souled woman thought of sordid motives that were by no means confined to the Italian decadence; but she managed the vain and vindictive man, who held reputations in the hollow of his hand, with graceful dignity and infinite tact. Living at a time when the great poets were passing, and literature was fast becoming the trade of artisans who appealed to the lowest passions of a sense-intoxicated people, or the tool of cynics and courtiers, she held her own way serenely, superior to worldly motives and worldly entanglements. There are numerous glimpses of her in the poems and letters of her time, but the chorus of praise was universal. "She has more eloquence and breathes more sweetness than all other women," says Ariosto, "and gives such force to her lofty words that she adorns the heavens in our day with another sun." And again: "She has not only made herself immortal by her beautiful style, than which I have heard none better, but she can raise from the tomb those of whom she speaks or writes, and make them live forever."

It was her sympathy with all high things that made her so warm a friend to the apostles of the new religious thought. Though an ardent Catholic, she was no bigot to be held within the iron-bound limits of a creed which had lost its moral force, no beauty-

loving disciple of an estheticism that veiled crime and corruption with the splendors of a ceremonial, sang Te Deums over the triumphs of the wicked and Misereres while plotting assassination. She felt the need of a purer morality and a deeper spirituality, though, like Savonarola, she wished reform within the church, not outside of it. We find her always in the ranks of the thinkers. She was the devoted friend of Contarini, the broad-minded cardinal, who grieved so sincerely over the universal corruption, and died, possibly of that grief and his own helplessness, before the hour came when it was a crime to speak one's best thoughts. He should have been Pope, she said in her sonnet on his death, to make the age happy. It was a striking tribute to the vigorous quality of her intellect that he dedicated to her his work "On Free Will." Fra Bernardino she defended when he fled to Switzerland and joined the Lutherans, but she was powerless to help him in his hours of darkness. Even this brought her under the suspicion of heresy. Carnesecchi, another of her friends, was burned, and one of the chief accusations against a Florentine who was condemned to a like fate years afterward was that he belonged to her circle. "It is an inexpressible pleasure to me that my counsels are approved by a woman of so much virtue and wisdom," wrote Sadolet to Cardinal Pole. She sustained these powerful prelates by the prestige of her name and

the fullness of her sympathy. The liberal circle of her friend Renée attracted her to Ferrara, but the air was full of suspicion. They talked much and pleasantly of literature, poetry, and the arts; when they touched upon the new thought which was revolutionizing the world, it was behind closed doors, and with the vivid consciousness that the walls had ears which stretched to Rome.

But to-day Vittoria Colonna is known best as the friend of Michelangelo, to whom she was a polar star, an inspiration, an everlasting joy. "Without wings, I fly with your wings; by your genius I am raised toward the skies," he writes. "In your soul my thought is born; my words are in your mind." It was the perfect sympathy of finely attuned spirits, the divine friendship that exists only between men and women who live at an altitude far above the things of sense. The age was full of talk about Platonic love. A few reached it, and they were of the spiritual elect; but they did not talk much about it. To this solitary artist, who dwelt on lonely heights, the divining and sympathetic spirit of a thoughtful woman was a revelation. He wrote sonnets to her, sometimes calm and philosophical, sometimes fiery and passionate. He also sent her poems and sketches for criticism. The tact with which she drew out the best in this colossal man is shown by a conversation in the softly lighted Chapel of San Silvestro, as recorded

by an artist who was present. She had been listening to a private exposition of St. Paul, but when Michelangelo came in, she delicately turned the conversation upon the subject nearest his heart, on which it was not easy to lead him to talk. Both were apart from the spirit of an age that was fast tearing down the few ethical standards it had, and virtually taking for its motto the most dangerous of fallacies, "Art for art's sake." "True painting is only an image of the perfection of God, a shadow of the pencil with which he paints, a melody, a striving after harmony," said the master. And the lady, in her turn, spoke, until the tears fell, of the divine message of art that "leads to piety, to glory, to greatness." They discussed, too, her project of building a convent on the spot where Nero had watched the burning of Rome, that "virtuous women might efface the memory of so wicked a man."

No shadow ever rested on this friendship. Michelangelo was past sixty and Vittoria was not far from forty-seven when they met. There is no trace of tender sentiment in their brief correspondence, though a deep and abiding friendship is apparent. Once she playfully writes him to curtail his letters lest they interfere with his duties at St. Peter's and keep her from the Chapel of St. Catherine, "so that one would fail in duty to the sisters of Christ and the other to his Vicar." She said that those who knew only his works

were ignorant of the best part of the man. When she lay dead before him he kissed her hand reverently, and went out in inconsolable grief to regret the rest of his life that he had not dared to leave a kiss on the pure forehead.

In early life, Vittoria, having no children of her own, had undertaken the care of her husband's cousin, the Marchese del Vasto, a boy of singular beauty, fine gifts, but wild and passionate temper, which no one had been able to control. Under her gentle and wise influence he had grown to be a brilliant and accomplished man, who never ceased to regard her with the greatest affection. She said that she could not be considered childless after molding the moral character of this son of her adoption. It was one of her great griefs that he died in the flower of his manhood, when the shadows were darkening about her and she needed more than ever his sympathy and support.

At this time fate laid upon her a heavy hand. When Rome became unsafe, she joined the devoted group that surrounded Cardinal Pole at Viterbo; but the last years before her final illness were spent in the Benedictine convent of St. Anne, where she prayed and wrote devotional poems. When she grew ill a celebrated physician said that the fairest light in this world would go out unless some physician for the mind could be found. Her friends were scattered or dead; the misfortunes of her family weighed

heavily on her spirit; the cruelties of the new régime had crushed the lives of many whom she loved; she had been forced to stifle her purest convictions and to turn away from the falling fortunes which she had no power to save. It was only a joy to lay down the burden of her fifty-seven years, surrounded by the few who were left to her. She ordered a simple burial, such as was given to the sisters in the convent. There was no memorial, and, strange to say, no one knows where she lies.

No woman better refutes the theory that knowledge makes pedants, that the gentler qualities fade before the cold light of the intellect. To a vigorous, versatile mind, and the calm courage of her convictions, Vittoria Colonna united a tender heart, fine sensibilities, and broad sympathies. Her clear judgment was tempered by a winning sweetness. The age of specialties was still in the distance, and the woman was superior to any of her achievements. In a period that was notably lax in morals, she carried herself among crowds of adorers with such gentle dignity that no cloud ever shadowed her fair fame. With this rare harmony of intellect, heart, and character, she held the essentials of life above all its decorations; but she retained to the end the simple graces, the flexible tact, and the stately manners of the *grande dame*.

This literary woman, great lady, and *dévote* of

centuries ago belongs to a type that is out of fashion to-day; it was not common even then. She was the perfected fruit of the finest spirit of her time. She did not write for money or fame; she sought neither honors nor society nor worldly pleasures, though she was a social queen by right of inheritance. She loved high things for their own sake and because she was akin to them. She loved her friends, too, for what they were, not for what they brought her, and gave them of her best, even to her own hurt. If she tried to reconcile her beliefs and her environment, it was a fault of sanity and loyalty; to break with her church traditions was to lose her influence and gain nothing. Possibly this is not the spirit of a reformer, but it is the spirit of those who trust to the saving quality of light rather than of heat. No doubt the conflict helped to wear out her waning forces. In this restless age the world praises such women from afar. They appeal to it as do the pictures of Raphael and Fra Angelico, which we are quite ready to adore as they hang in gallery or drawing-room, for some subtle quality of beauty consecrated by the homage of centuries, though their underlying significance we may have long outgrown. If they are seen at rare intervals in real life, we give them a certain tribute of admiration, no doubt, but we are apt to speak of them personally as visionary, antiquated, or otherworldly. The lofty sentiment, the stateliness, the

repose, the indefinable distinction, are not in the line of modern ideals.

VII

IT is worthy of note that in an age which was essentially devoted to beauty and a glorification of the senses, women almost invariably wrote on sacred or ethical themes. Even love they transfigured into something divine. The first-fruits of their intelligence were offered on the shrine of a purer morality. As a rule, too, they were women of serious tastes and conspicuous virtues.

There was one poet, however, of some note who may be mentioned as an exception to the consistently high character of the literary women of a notably wicked period; but even her poems were largely religious in tone. Tullia d'Aragona, who discussed affairs in Latin and wrote Greek when a child, was a wit, a genius, and a brilliant woman. She had a bad father, though he was a cardinal, and a mother who was beautiful but is not plainly visible at this distance. The clever Tullia, who had a questionable salon at Rome, with plenty of cardinals and princes in her train, carried with her to other courts a certain prestige which they did not scrutinize too closely, and she fascinated many men who were not quite equal to the moral and intellectual altitude of a Vittoria Colonna or an Olympia Morata. "Vittoria is a moon, Tullia a sun," said an enthu-

siastic admirer and fellow-poet. But in the waning of her charms she turned seriously to literature, and wrote a poem of thirty thousand lines, besides a curious dialogue on "The Infinity of Love," and many sonnets. At this time in her life, which verged toward the twilight, she had put off frivolous things and was disposed to moralize. In the preface to her poem she says that reading is a resource for women when everything else fails; but she mourns over the fact that Boccaccio, who claimed to write for them, said so many things not fit to be read; that even Ariosto was not above reproach; and closes by declaring that she has not put down a word that might not be read by "maiden, nun, or widow at any hour"—all of which goes to show the final tendency of women toward moral ideals, in spite of the entanglements of very mundane surroundings. They take refuge in charity and religion from a world that has ceased to charm, as men do in cynicism and stimulants.

This versatile poet of more esprit than decorum had a great deal of incense offered her, and in the end won even the patronage of the grave, virtuous, and sorrowful Eleanor of Toledo, but she died in penitence and misery. As she lived and shone in the most dissolute society of her day, and was trained from childhood with special reference to pleasing men of brilliant position and gifts but low morals, she by no means fitly represents the

learned women of Italy, whether of court or university. She belonged to a class apart. We lift our eyes at the laxity of a society which could receive and smile upon her, but we have not far to go to find the same complaisance even in a period that prides itself on its superior morals. Our censor of the twenty-fifth century may find here a text for a sermon on the wickedness of the scientific age, which he will otherwise prove by copious quotations from the glaring headlines of our daily journals.

So far as appears, in an age when no man's life was secure and no woman's honor was quite safe, when men in power did not scruple to send those who were in their way out of the world, atoning for it, if it needed atonement, at least celebrating it, by a grand Te Deum, or a De Profundis,—which seems more suitable though less cheerful,—it was the women of the highest intelligence who held the balance of humanity and morals. There were wicked ones, no doubt, in abundance, as the more facile and helpless sex was not free from the subtle influence of the spirit of the age against which good men with all their vaunted strength struggled in vain. But it can hardly be disputed that the virtues and graces of character blossomed in the most significant profusion among women of distinctly scholarly tastes, who found in the pleasures of the intellect an unfailing resource against the vices as well as the sorrows and disappointments of a bad and pitiless world.

THE LITERARY COURTS AND PLATONIC LOVE

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• Social Spirit of Women •
• Accomplished Princesses • Their Executive Ability •
• Caterina Sforza • Patrons of Letters •
• Court of Urbino •
• Duchess Elisabetta • Count Castiglione •
• Record of Conversations • Qualities of a Lady •
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• Platonic Love • Court of Ferrara •
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THE LITERARY COURTS AND PLATONIC LOVE

I

WE have heard of a man who, after writing two hundred volumes or so on various learned subjects, added a "Eulogy of Silence." Among other curious things, he said that he was "never more with those he loved than when alone." Men have sometimes been known to prefer society in this form, but women rarely; they like things in the concrete, and they like to talk about them. They may turn to a life of the spirit, but even this they do not care to live in solitude. There are few anchorets among them. In their exaltation, as in their pursuit of knowledge, they seek companionship.

Just how much women had to do with awakening the world from its long sleep we do not know, but they were very active in keeping it awake after

it began to open its eyes. They mastered old languages, studied old manuscripts, held public discussions on classic themes, wrote verses, and entered with enthusiasm into the search for records that had been lying in the dust for a thousand years. But they did more than this: they revived the art of conversation and created society anew. Possibly this was the most distinct heritage they left to the coming ages.

If conversation did not reach its maturity in Italy, it had its brilliant youth there. Later it was taken up in France, spiced with Gallic wit, and raised to the dignity of a fine art; but it lost a little of its first seriousness. The accomplished princesses of the Renaissance, who raved over a new-found line of Plato or Socrates, and expatiated on the merits of a long-buried statue they had helped to unearth, recalled the famous circle of Aspasia and made social centers of their own. But they added a fresh and original flavor. One does not copy accurately after fifteen or twenty centuries, nor even after two or three; but we are safe in thinking that these groups of poets, statesmen, prelates, artists, wits, and litterateurs, who discussed the new life and thought, were not far behind their model in brilliancy. If the men were not so great, the world was older, the field of knowledge was wider, and there was more to talk about. Then, there was but one Aspasia. If there were lesser

stars of her own sex, we do not know who they were. It was a brave woman, whatever her abilities may have been, if she had a reputation to lose, that would show her face in the society of those grand old Greeks who claimed the universe for themselves and made of her an insignificant vassal. But there was a multitude of women, both clever and learned, who added life and piquancy to the coteries of the Renaissance. Men were proud of the versatile wives and daughters who made their courts centers of light and learning; if they were without lettered tastes themselves, they were glad of the reflected glory. So, naturally, it was the ambition of every well-born girl to fit herself to shine in these brilliant circles, and every father who had a daughter of talent was conscious of possessing a treasure of great value upon which too much care could not be lavished.

It must not be thought, however, that the women who made their courts so famous were simply devotees of fashion, or the pretty toys of men's caprices, any more than they were colorless saints of the household or cloister. They were not without high domestic and womanly virtues, but they had also intelligence, a grasp of affairs, masterly character, and the tact to make all these qualities available for the good of their families and society. They were versed not only in classic lore, but in the art of living. It was not weakness that consti-

tuted their charm; it was their symmetry and the fullness of their strength.

As we have already seen, it was an age of educated women. A lady was expected to understand Latin, at least, besides her own language, and Greek was a common acquirement. The earliest Greek grammar was written by the celebrated Lascaris for Ippolita Sforza, the wife of Alfonso and a ruling spirit at the lettered court of Naples. In her precocious childhood this brilliant princess made a collection of Latin apothegms, and a translation of Cicero's "De Senectute," which is said to be still preserved in a convent at Rome. Plato, Seneca, and other philosophers supplied the great ladies of four centuries ago with moral nutriment, and Cicero was studied as a model of style. With the exception of Vergil and parts of Horace, the Latin poets were too coarse, and Boccaccio was forbidden; but Dante was a favorite companion of leisure hours, and Petrarch, the high priest of Platonism, an idol. The "Lives of the Fathers" and the chronicles of the saints were antidotes to the worldliness of poets and historians. It was understood, however, that literary tastes must not interfere with prayers and an intelligent oversight of the household.

Of their talent for administration these versatile princesses gave ample evidence. They were constantly called upon to hold the reins of govern-

ment when their husbands were absent, and ruled with great wisdom and skill. We do not hear that they talked much of their ability to do various things not usually included among a woman's duties, but they did them at need as a matter of course. In affairs of delicate diplomacy they were of special value, also in questions pertaining to morals. It is interesting to know that this quarrelsome period had its peace societies, as well as our own, and that the Pacieri, which was organized to prevent litigation, was made up of men and women. Veronica Gambara used her influence and her pen in the interest of peace, also Vittoria Colonna, and many others.

Some of the women who ruled so ably, however, were of virile temper, and threw themselves with passionate energy into the storm and stress of affairs, though it was rarely, if ever, from choice. In an emergency they could ride fearlessly to the field of battle, or address a foreign council. It was to save her children's heritage that Caterina Sforza defended the rocky fortress of Forli after the violent death of her husband. She was a picturesque figure, this imposing lady of fair face, golden hair, indomitable spirit, and fiery temper, as accomplished as she was beautiful and brave, who rode at the head of her troops, and graciously smiled upon the people, who loved her and were ready to die for her. As a lovely bride of fifteen she had made a

triumphal entry into Rome, where she lived like a queen, and literally controlled the fate of every one who sought aid, promotion, or a place of her uncle, the formidable Sixtus IV, but she was destined to come to the front in many a stormy crisis. She was only twenty-two when the Pope died suddenly, but she took prompt possession of the castle of St. Angelo in the name of her absent husband, who was Commander of the Forces, and found there an asylum for her children until she could make terms that saved the family fortunes. No wonder the husband took her with him when he went to Venice, that he might avail himself of her swift and clear judgment in his delicate negotiations.

The history of this fifteenth-century heroine reads like the most improbable romance. With the daring of a man, she had the flexibility of a woman. If she could hold her own against an army and crush an enemy with inexorable decision, she could care for the wounded like a nurse. She danced as vigorously as she ruled, and did not disdain the arts of a coquette or a diplomatist. One and the most obscure of her three husbands she loved, but the others she served well. Of fear she was incapable. "I am used to grief; I am not afraid of it," she wrote to her son from the solitary cell at Rome, where she was caged for a time by the terrible Borgia Pope in the fortress over which she had once ruled. But the careful, devoted mother, who

was so full of energy, so generous to her friends, so courageous in war, so subtle in diplomacy, so dignified in misfortune, turned in her last years to spiritual things with the same ardor she had given to mundane ones. She had lived her life, and retired from its storms at thirty-nine. Then she gave herself to the austerities of a convent at Florence, still directing the education of her young children. If we do not approve of all the methods of this irrepressible woman of clear head and strong heart, we have to judge her by the standards of an age in which the directors of the world's conscience scoffed at morality and gave the prizes of life to libertines and assassins. I quote her as one out of many, to show the firm quality and abounding vitality as well as the solid attainments of the women of this remarkable period.

But the special mission of these princesses, so valiant on occasion, was to patronize learning and the arts, to aid men of letters, to diffuse a taste for the beautiful, to put a curb on license, so far as this was possible, and to foster discussions of things high and serious. They vied with one another in making their courts intellectually luminous. The more we study them, the more we are convinced of the beneficent influence of thoroughly trained, broad-minded women in molding the destinies of nations as well as of individuals. We are fascinated by their variable charm, their mastery of life in its larger as

well as its smaller phases. The woman who led all hearts captive with her beauty, her gaiety, her kindness, the faithful wife, the tender mother, the sympathetic friend, was also the woman of lucid intellect and strong soul, who sustained her husband in his darkest hours and added laurels to his glory while winning some for herself.

II

Of the Italian courts, it was only those led by able women that left a permanent fame. If they are associated with the names of great men who gave them the halo of their own glory, it was women who made a society for these men, inspired them, and centralized their influence. Urbino was called the Athens of Italy. During the reign of the Duchess Elisabetta it is safe to say that there was hardly a man of distinction in the country, whether poet, artist, prelate, or statesman, who did not find his way there sooner or later. It may be pleasant to dwell a little on this brilliant court, which was the best and purest of its time and furnished the model upon which the Hôtel de Rambouillet was founded more than a century afterward. It was more fortunate than others in having a chronicler. Count Castiglione left a graphic picture of its personnel and amusements, as well as a record of some of its conversations, so that we know not

only the quality of the people who met there, but what they thought, what they talked about, and what they did. He gives us the best glimpse we have of the society and manners of the golden age of the Renaissance.

But this atmosphere of culture and refinement was not made in a day. It was largely due to the more or less gifted princesses who had lived or ruled there for more than a hundred years. Far back toward the beginning of the fifteenth century there was a Battista who was distinguished for her piety, her talents, and her noble character. A worthless husband drove her to seek refuge with her brother at Urbino, where she solaced the wounds of her heart in writing sonnets and moral essays on faith and human frailty, also in corresponding with scholars and sending Latin letters to her father-in-law, a Malatesta, who had fostered her literary tastes and evidently remained her friend. Her daughter inherited her sorrows with her talents, and both closed their lives, after the fashion of women to whom the world has not been kind or has lost its charm, in the austerities of a convent. Her granddaughter was Costanza Varana, a valued friend of philosophers and men of learning; but she died early, leaving another Battista, who was sent to Milan at four to be educated with her precocious cousin Ippolita Sforza. The extraordinary gifts of this child have already been men-

tioned, but she more than fulfilled her promise. At fifteen, or earlier, she was married to Federigo, the great Duke of Urbino, who shared the enthusiasm of the Medici in the revival of the classics. This small duchess of vigorous intellect, much learning, and strong character, was in full sympathy with her husband's tastes, and he speaks of her as "the ornament of his house, the delight of his public and private hours." If she could read Demosthenes and Plato, and talk with the wisdom of Cicero, as one of her contemporaries tells us, she was not spoiled for the practical duties of her position. At an age when our school-girls are playing golf or conning their lessons, she was prudently managing affairs of the State of which she was regent in her husband's absence. She was simple in manners, cared little for dress, and put on her magnificent robes only for courtly ceremonies to maintain the outward dignity of her place. At Rome she was greatly honored by the Pope, whom she addressed in Latin, much to his delight. But this beautiful, gifted, efficient, and adored woman died at twenty-six, leaving seven children, a broken-hearted husband, and a sorrowing people. The glories of her short, full life were sung by poets, statesmen, and churchmen alike. She left the imperishable stamp of intellect and taste on all her surroundings, and is of special interest to us as the grandmother of Vittoria Colonna, in whom

the talent of generations found its consummate flower.

But the luminous period of Urbino was during the reign of her son, who added to the martial qualities and manly accomplishments of his age, remarkable talent, great learning, and a singularly gentle character. This was the Duke Guidobaldo, who consoled his friends in his last moments with lines from Vergil. His health was always delicate, and the brilliancy of his court was due to his wife, the celebrated Elisabetta Gonzaga, who had been reared in the scholarly air of Mantua, where the daughters were educated with the sons. She found in her new home standards of culture that had been set, as we have seen, by a long line of princesses devoted to things of the intellect.

In its palmy days, the young Giuliano de' Medici, son of the great Lorenzo and brother of Leo X, —the one who was immortalized by Michelangelo in the statue so familiar to the traveler in the Medicean Chapel at Florence,—was living at Urbino during the exile of his family. It was also the home of the "divine Bembo," critic, Platonist, arbiter of letters, finally cardinal, and one of the most famous men of his time, though his claim to be called "divine" is not apparent. The witty Mæcenas of this group was Bibbiena, poet, diplomat, man of the world, a dilettante in taste and an Epicurean in philosophy, also a cardinal and an aspirant for the

papal throne. There were, too, the Fregosos, men of strong intellect, many personal attractions, and manly character, one of whom became the Doge of Genoa, and the other a cardinal—with many others of fame and learning whose names signify little to us to-day. By no means the least important member of the household was Castiglione, the courtier and diplomat of classical tastes and varied accomplishments, who has given us so pleasant a glimpse of its sayings and doings. To this intellectual Mecca came, from time to time, literary pilgrims from all parts of the world.

It was the special mission of the Duchess Elisabetta to fuse these elements into a society that should be a model for other courts and coming generations. Here lies her originality and her claim to distinction. This clever princess, who loved her husband devotedly, cared for the poor and sorrowing among her people, and had moral convictions of her own as well as ideas, was well fitted for her position. Without any pretension to genius, she had a clear, discriminating mind, rare intelligence, great beauty, and gracious manners. Her character had a fine symmetry, and she was equally successful in directing her household, conversing with great men, and holding the reins of government when her husband—a condottiere by profession, like most of the smaller princes—was in the field elsewhere. Surrounded by adorers

in an age when indiscretions, even sins, were easily forgiven, no breath of censure ever touched her fair name. Her dignity and a reserve that verged upon coldness gave a pure tone to her court. She permitted neither malicious gossip nor heated talk, and required unsullied honor and exemplary conduct of her friends. We might question the standards a little, as men at least were privileged beings not to be too closely scrutinized.

In her social duties she had the efficient aid of Emilia Pia, the duke's sister-in-law, a woman of brilliant intellect and high character, who had lost her husband in youth, and lived at Urbino. Of a gayer turn, her ready wit and happy temperament, added to her knowledge and personal fascination, made her the life of the house. Other and younger ladies of well-known names and kindred tastes figure in its diversions.

The magnificent old palace that overlooked the city from its picturesque site among the hills was one of the finest in Italy. Its stately rooms were filled with rare treasures of painting, sculpture, mosaic, and costly furniture. There were exquisite decorations in marble and tarsia, and the walls were draped with rich tapestries. Raphael was a youth then, and no doubt his first dreams had been of these beautiful things, among which he must have rambled. It is likely, too, that he met here the friends who were of so much service to him after-

ward at Rome, among them Bibbiena, to whose grandniece he was betrothed. His father had painted some of the frescos, and was a welcome visitor. Other artists were invited there, and added to the glories of the famous pile. Among these surroundings of art and beauty, with the traditions of culture that lay behind them, clever, thoughtful women and brilliant men met evening after evening to talk of the world and its affairs, of things light and serious, of love, manners, literature, statecraft, and philosophy. When they tired of grave themes, they amused themselves with allegories, playful badinage, witty repartees, and devices of all sorts to stimulate the intellect. After supper there was music and dancing, if the conversation did not last until the morning hours. Sometimes they had their own plays acted in the pretty little theater. It was here that Bibbiena's famous comedy, "Calandra," with its gorgeous pagan setting and its curious blending of love and mythology, of nymphs, Cupids, and goddesses, was first given to an admiring world.

But we are most interested to-day in the conversations. Many evenings were devoted to defining the character and duties of a courtier, which differed little from those of a modern gentleman, except in the exaggerated deference claimed to be due to a superior and verging upon servility. It is more to the purpose here to touch upon the

discussions relating to women, as they furnish a key to fifteenth-century manners which were the basis of all modern codes, though to-day many of the best of their formulas are more conspicuous in the breach than in the observance.

It was agreed that a lady must be gracious, affable, discreet, of character above reproach, free from pride or envy, and neither vain, contentious, nor arrogant. To speak of the failings of others, or listen to reflections upon them, was taken as an indication that one's own follies needed a vindication or a veil. This model lady must dress with taste, but not think too much about it, and she was forbidden to dye her hair, or use cosmetics and other artificial aids to beauty. Her personal distinction lay in an elegant simplicity, without luxury or pretension. She must know how to manage her children and her fortune, as well as her household; but she was expected to be versed in letters, music, and the arts, also to be able to converse on any topic of the day without childish affectation of knowledge which she did not possess. Modesty, tact, decorum, and purity of thought were cardinal virtues, and religion was a matter of course. Noisy manners, egotism, and familiarity were unpardonable. Dignity, self-possession, and a gentle urbanity were marks of good breeding. No license in language was permitted, but we cannot help wondering what they called license. Men,

it must be added, could be about as wicked as they liked, and, if history is to be trusted, many in high places were very wicked indeed. The latitude of the best of them in speech would be rather embarrassing to the sensitive woman of our time; but the days of the précieuses had not dawned, and no one hesitated to call a spade a spade, even if it were a very black one. Women might blush and be silent, but further protest was set down as disagreeable prudery. Perhaps the frank naturalism of the Latin races must be taken into account, as it often quite unconsciously shocks our own more delicate tastes even to-day. But it was conceded that no man was so bad as not to esteem a woman of pure character and refined sensibilities.

These men and women who lived on the confines of two great centuries and tried to introduce a finer code of manners and morals, touched also on the equality of the sexes, a question which agitated that world as it does our own. Some one asks, one evening, why women should not be permitted to govern cities, make laws, and command armies.

Giuliano de' Medici, who was an ardent champion of the dependent sex, replies that it might not be amiss. Many of them he declares to be as capable of doing these things as men, and he cites history to show that they have led armies and governed with equal prudence. To a friend who mildly sug-

gests that women are inferior, he says that "the difference is accidental, not essential," adding that the qualities of strength, activity, and endurance are not always most esteemed, even in men. As to mind, "whatever men can know and understand, women can also; where one intellect penetrates, so does the other. . . . Many have been learned in philosophy, written poetry, practised law, and spoken with eloquence."

A gentleman of the party ungallantly remarks that women desire to be men so as to be more perfect.

Giuliano wisely answers that it is not for perfection, but for liberty to shake off the power that men assume over them. He says they are more firm and constant in affection, as men are apt to be wandering and unsettled. When asked to name women who are equal to men, he replies that he is confounded by numbers, but mentions, among others, "Portia, Cornelia, and Nicostrata, mother of Evander, who taught the Latins the use of letters." "Rome," he adds, "owes its greatness as much to women as to men. . . . They were never in any age inferior, nor are they now." He goes on to cite Countess Matilda, Anne of France, wife of two kings in succession, and inferior to neither, Marguerite, daughter of Maximilian, famed for prudence and justice, Isabella of Mantua, singularly great and virtuous, with many other noted women

of his time. "If there are Cleopatras, there are multitudes of Sardanapali who are much worse."

The limits of this paper permit only the suggestion of a few points in a long conversation which touched the subject on every side. It was interspersed with thoughtful questions from the duchess, who did not fail to interfere if it took too free a turn, also with brilliant sallies of wit from Emilia Pia, and spicy comments from the less serious members of the party. They were not all in accord with the opinions quoted here, but, on the whole, Giuliano de' Medici and his supporters, who paid a fine tribute to the abilities of women without wishing to impose upon them heavier duties, had the best of the argument.

From men, women, and manners, the transition to love was an easy one, and this fifteenth-century coterie discussed it in all its variations, as we discuss the last play, or the last novel, or the last word in sociology, or the misty era of universal peace. It was not a new thing to discourse upon the most interesting of human passions. Men had talked of it centuries before on the banks of the Ilissus; but when they passed from its lowest phases they lost themselves in metaphysical subtleties. It became an intellectual aspiration, a "passion of the reason," without warmth or life. Diotima, a woman quoted by Socrates, called it "a mystic dream of the beautiful

and good"; but if she was not a myth herself, she could not join the symposia of philosophers. Outside of the circle of Aspasia, no respectable woman was admitted to the conversations of men; indeed, these finely drawn dissertations on love had small reference to her. In the classic world women had no part in the marriage of souls. Love, when not purely a thing of the senses, was a worship of beauty, and the Greek ideal of beauty was a masculine one. They might die for a Helen, but it was not for love. These wise talkers sent the flute-players to amuse their wives and daughters in the inner court, while they considered high things, as well as many not suitable for delicate ears. The coarser Romans treated love as altogether a thing of the senses, with Ovid as a text.

But in the golden age of the Renaissance, women no longer stayed in the inner court, to gossip and listen to flute-players, while their husbands talked on themes high or low. The worship of the Madonna, if it had done little else, had idealized the pure affection of an exalted womanhood. Chivalry following in its train had made the cult of woman a fashion by giving her more or less of the homage already paid to her divine representative, though this sentiment was less active in Italy than in Provence or among the more romantic races. It was a tribute of strength to helplessness, and had its roots in the finest traits of men; but it exalted moral qualities

rather than intellectual ones, and was largely theoretical outside of a limited class. Now that men had begun to dip into classic lore, however, they found a valuable ally in women, and the old cult became a companionship. To be educated and a princess was to be doubly a power, to have opinions which it was worth while to consider.

The princesses of Urbino had doubtless read Plato. In an age, too, that occupied itself with Boccaccio, who had glorified the senses and written books that no pure and refined woman could read, they had turned to Dante and the spiritual love which was an inspiration and a benediction. In the white soul of Beatrice they found the exquisite flower of womanhood. They caught also the subtle fragrance of the ideal love which Petrarch gave, first to a woman, then to an unfading memory. It was of such a love they dreamed and liked to talk. Then one of the chief apostles of Platonism was the brilliant Bembo, who was the star of this company. "Through love," he says, "the supreme virtues rule the inferior." He puts on record and dedicates to Lucrezia Borgia the conversations of three days on its joys and sorrows; but the subject was evidently exhausted, as, at the end, a hermit gives a homily on the vanity of the world. He closes an eloquent apostrophe, however, with these words: "Chase away ignorance and make us see celestial beauty in its perfection. Love, it is the communion with

divine beauty, the banquet of angels, the heavenly ambrosia." On this theme his listeners rang the changes, but not always on so ethereal a plane. The relative constancy of the sexes, the divine right of man, the passive nature of woman, who was called a pale moon to the masculine sun, and various other points, had their fair share of discussion. Between terrestrial and celestial love there are many gradations, and the character and temperament of the men were clearly revealed in their opinions. Some were disposed to be autocrats, others took issue with masculine egotism, and still others dwelt on the sentimental side of the question. One of the Fregosos rather ungraciously assumed the traditional attitude of his sex and contended that women are "imperfect animals," not at all to be compared with men. But he was in an unpopular minority. The Duchess Elisabetta was a well-poised, discreet woman, who was devoted to her invalid husband, kept her admirers at a prudent distance, and was in no wise a victim to superfluous sensibility. The effusive Bembo, who was given to friendships touched with the fire of the imagination, was untiring in his devotion to this Minerva, but he confessedly adored her as a goddess from afar. The witty and brilliant Emilia Pia had a temperament the reverse of sentimental, and was ready to demolish any castle of moonlight with a shaft of merciless satire. Both brought a solid equipment

of common sense into an analysis that often reached a very fine point. But this friendship that was not love, this love that was a sublimated friendship, appealed to them as it did to many others besides poets in a grossly material age. To separate the soul from the senses and intellectualize the emotions, was the natural protest of intelligent women against the old traditions that considered them only as servants or toys of men's fancies. It took them out of the realm of the passions and "gave them wings for a sublime flight." The mysticism of love is closely related to the mysticism of religion, and the faith that sees God in ecstatic visions is not far from the love that feeds itself from spiritual sources. These rambling talks, to which the young ladies listened curiously and with interest, though usually in discreet silence, proved so absorbing that on the last of a series of evenings devoted to the subject, the party forgot its usual gaieties, and did not disperse until the birds began to sing in the trees and the rosy dawn shone over the rugged heights of Monte Catri.

III

It was these conversations that set in motion the wave of Platonism which swept over the surface of society for two or three centuries, until it lost itself in the pale inanities and vapid phrases of the pré-

cieuses. We find it difficult now to conceive of a company of grave dignitaries old and young, statesmen, wits, men of letters, and clever women, chasing theories of love through an infinity of shades and gradations, as seriously as we talk of trusts, strikes, education, and the best means of making everybody happy. The subject had a perennial interest for them. They considered it mathematically as to quantity, spiritually as to quality. They quoted Plato on love and divine beauty, but no one would have been more surprised at the application than the philosopher himself. They proposed to do away with all the chagrins and disenchantments of love, by making it altogether a dream, beautiful, no doubt, but shadowy. As a last refuge, they put terrestrial love into celestial robes and drowned themselves in illusions. Bembo wished to serve Isabella d'Este "as if she were Pope," but he sends her quite tenderly the kiss of his soul, which she, no doubt, took gracefully and at its value. She was not a sentimental woman; a clear, vigorous intellect is a very good antidote against false sensibility. But these other vigorous intellects were so busy weaving the tissue of their dreams that they did not trouble themselves much about possible applications.

This Platonic mania, which ran through Italian society, and, if it did nothing else, tempered its grossness and spiritualized its ideals, did not origi-

nate at Urbino, though it probably blossomed into a fashion there. Petrarch found the germ in Plato, but he developed it into fruit of quite another color, and furnished the poets after him with a new background for their fantasy-flowers. The magnificent Lorenzo, poet, ruler, patron of letters, Platonist, and buffoon, went into poetic raptures at the sight of the beautiful face of "la belle Simonetta" as she lay white and cold on the bier that passed him in the street. He dreamed of it, apostrophized it, grew melancholy over it, until he found a living face almost as lovely about which to drape the pearls of his poetic fancy. He wrote sonnets à la Petrarch, without the genuine ring of Petrarch. It was all moonlight, the pale copy of a paler emotion. But he did not in the least lose control of what he called his heart, as he dutifully married the woman his clear-headed mother chose for him; she was not at all a figure of romance and, it is to be hoped, had small knowledge of the vagaries of her theoretically Platonic husband. In any case, it was the destiny of her sex to submit to the inevitable.

But the dreams of the poets naturally found an echo in the hearts of lonely women and artless maidens. When marriage was a matter of bargain and sale, a union of fortune and interest in which love played no part, sensibility was a subtle factor difficult to reckon with. A man had legally, as well as morally, supreme control over his wife. He might

happen to love her and be kind to her, but if he chose to neglect her or beat her, there was no one to find fault with him. This "divine right" of man was the foundation-stone of society, and it was no more possible to question it than it was to question the divine right of popes and kings. Princesses were privileged beings who were both useful and ornamental, but this did not save them from being ill-treated to the last degree. No one thought of interfering when one of the later Medici, angry at his sister, sent for her husband and, after telling him that her frivolous conduct reflected on the decorum of his very disreputable court, bade him remember that he was a Christian and a gentleman, placed a villa at his disposal, and the hapless but too gay Isabella, who went there with suspicious reluctance, suddenly died of a convenient apoplexy, and appeared no more on this earthly scene to be a thorn in the side of her brother's favorite, the very beautiful but too aspiring Bianca Capello. His sister-in-law, a much-wronged Spanish princess, was invited to a gloomy old castle among the hills at the same time, and disposed of in a similar way, by her amiable husband, who asked forty thousand ducats for the deed, and expiated it at once by a prayer to the Virgin, and a vow which he forgot.

With all these tragic possibilities, it was out of the question to secure a divorce for any incompatibility

of temper, small or great, unless his Holiness saw that it would serve some interest or caprice of his own, and incidentally add to the glory of the church. But pent-up emotions are apt to be troublesome, and it is hardly strange that these women, with an abyss on one side and a vacuum on the other, sought a way of reconciling matters that infringed visibly on no man's rights. They adopted the fashion of supplementing a terrestrial love that was not very comfortable with a celestial one which, if rather attenuated, seemed quite innocent and harmless, and gave them something pleasant to think about. These airy and Platonic sentiments had a much more substantial character among men and women who lived at a high mental altitude. It is to live confessedly on a very low plane to deny that there is a tie of the intellect which tends only to fine issues, and is a source of light and inspiration. But this implies first of all an intellect of distinct range, and a clear moral sense, that are not always forthcoming. The friendship between Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna was a sympathy between two exalted souls who dwelt habitually on the heights, far above the mists of sense and the banalities of lesser minds. "Friendship is not a sentiment without fire," wrote the cold and skeptical Buffon to Mme. Necker, nearly four centuries later; "it is rather a warming of the soul, an emotion, a movement sweeter than that of any other

passion, and also quite as strong." But this passion of friendship can exist in its perfection only between those in whom sensibility lights the intellect without submerging it; on a lower plane it has its dangers.

In the days of the précieuses, the apostles of Platonic love cut the cord that bound them to reality, and floated away on a cloud of pure emotionalism. Merged in affectations, it finally evaporated in phrases on the lips of sighing youths and romantic maidens. In the Anglo-Saxon world it never had a very strong foothold. The race is not sufficiently imaginative.

There is no doubt that there has been a great deal of senseless talk about Platonic love, and that it drew after it much that was far from Platonic. We all know that one of the most conspicuous daughters of devotion is hypocrisy, but who can hold religion responsible because its garb is put on to disguise sin? The trouble is that the finest spirits are apt to be measured by the standards of the lowest. It is not easy to convince people of material ideals that all things are not to be brought to their level. But this curious agitation had its place and did its work. We may smile at the finely drawn sophistries of a Bembo, who pointed to an ideal he sometimes failed to reach. It is easy enough for cynics to say that Beatrice, the apotheosis of spiritual love, died early, and was worshiped, not as

a woman, but as a star shining from inaccessible heights; that Laura, the ideal of the high priest of Platonism, was simply a dream, intangible as the moonlight and cold as the everlasting snows; that it is not good for every-day men and women to see such visions, even if it were possible, nor to dream such dreams, nor to live at such an altitude—all of which no doubt has its side of truth. But the fact remains that it was largely through the inspired vision, which looked past the entanglements of sense into the pure heart and transparent soul of an idealized womanhood, that the long-enduring sex came into its intellectual kingdom. To the old ties of interest, passion, and habit, were added those of the intellect and spirit. In this new contact of intelligences society had its birth, women took their rightful places, and the world found a new regenerating force.

IV

THE life at Urbino, with its literary flavor, its refined manners, its serious conversations, and its Platonic dreams, took another tone at Ferrara. This court was gayer, but hardly less noted as a center of culture. No one chronicled its conversations, but the fame of its poets illuminated it. Boiardo lived and wrote and administered affairs in the magnificent old castle whose four towers frown to-day in lonely grandeur over the silent and grass-grown streets of

the once lively city; Ariosto immortalized the women "as fair as good, and as learned as they were fair," who gathered artists, men of letters, statesmen, cardinals, and philosophers within its tapestried walls; and the genius of Tasso still sheds over it a melancholy splendor strangely contrasting with the tragedy that left so dark a cloud on the last days of its glory.

The Duke Hercules I did a wise thing for the brilliancy of his reign when he chose for his wife the learned and accomplished Leonora of Aragon, who had grown up in the intellectual atmosphere of her royal father's court at Naples. She was a versatile princess, a lover of art, a patron of letters, and an able, efficient woman, who gave equal care to the fostering of talent and the practical interests of her people. The art of gold and silver metal work, on which she was an authority, reached great perfection under her patronage, and she gave her personal supervision to the skilled embroiderers whom she brought from elsewhere to stimulate the native artists. When her husband was absent he left the government in her charge. Nothing shows more clearly the masterful ability of these Italian princesses than the wisdom and facility with which they managed public affairs, and the confidence reposed in them. In this model republic of the twentieth century, who would think of intrusting matters of State to the wife of president or gov-

ernor in any emergency whatever? Let us admit that women are not trained here for such responsibilities, even if they cared to assume them; but why treat us to a homily on their natural incapacity for affairs of State, in the face of innumerable examples in the past that prove the contrary?

And these women lost neither their charm nor their essentially feminine qualities. Certainly there was no wiser mother than this same Duchess Leonora. Her daughters had the best of masters, and were versed in all the knowledge of the day, as well as in the lighter accomplishments. They were schooled also in the duties of their high position, and were never permitted to neglect their serious studies for amusement. While they were busy with their tapestries some man of letters recited or read to them. Perhaps it was Boiardo, perhaps another of the literary stars of the court. The untiring mother had her reward in the fame and virtuous character of these children. One of them, the beautiful and gifted Isabella d'Este, had a brilliant career as the Marchioness of Mantua, and her scarcely less fascinating sister Beatrice carried the tastes of her own youth to the more splendid but corrupt court of the Sforzas at Milan.

The enlightened duchess, who seems to have been as kind as she was capable, did not escape calumny, as few did in that age of license; but she has a blessed immortality in the glowing lines of

Ariosto, who paid an eloquent tribute to her talents and virtues at her death. The court of Ferrara never lost the lettered tone which she gave it, though its fashions of living and thinking changed from time to time.

One cannot quote her son's wife, the fair-haired Lucrezia Borgia, as a model princess, though in later years she partly redeemed the faults of her past by her kindness to the poor, her intelligent patronage of art and letters, and her devotion as wife and mother. It is not likely that she was as black as she has been painted, or, as has been suggested by later historians, Ariosto, with all his courtier love for paying pretty compliments to women, especially princesses, would hardly have dared to put her on a level with the Roman Lucretia in "charms and chastity," in a country where satire was merciless and scandal many-tongued. In her tragical youth she was possibly more sinned against than sinning. With a father who was the embodiment of all the vices, and brothers as powerful as they were infamous, one can readily imagine that she had little choice in her manner of life. It was quite in the interest of this terrible trio that her three husbands were disposed of in one way or another, and it was equally in their interest that the widowed Duke Alfonso was virtually forced to marry her, though evidently against his inclination. The wishes of a Holy Father

with unlimited power were compelling. And so it happened that this beautiful, clever, and much-talked-of woman went to Ferrara with a flourish of trumpets, as became a pope's daughter. She was only twenty-five, though she had seen tragedies enough to color a lifetime. On her way she visited Urbino with her two thousand attendants,—princesses were costly guests in those days,—and the good Duchess Elisabetta, by command of this wicked and grasping Holy Father, who had designs on her own domains that might be furthered by her absence, went with the much heralded bride to take part in the magnificent wedding festivities. There was little in the entry of this brilliant but very much clouded Lucrezia on her white jennet, resplendent in satin and gold and flashing jewels, to suggest the beauty and desirableness of "plain living and high thinking." To be sure, she had university dons to support her canopy, and all the learning of Ferrara in her train; but it was a fashion of these princesses to honor scholars. Then there were comedies of Plautus to give the occasion a classic flavor, besides music, dancing, medieval combats, Moorish interludes, and more barbaric amusements for the multitude. The splendors of dress, the wealth of velvets, brocades, gold, and gems, were all duly chronicled by the society reporter of the time, and the descriptions of modern court balls seem modest and tame in compar-

ison. The good Duchess Leonora had been sleeping in her tomb with the other princesses many a year, duly labeled by Ariosto. But the pure-souled Isabella d'Este was there with a new and regal costume for every scene, and no doubt various misgivings about her imposing sister-in-law which she thought best to say nothing about.

This dangerous Lucrezia, however, had her serious moments. After the pageants were over, she took out of her traveling-case the Dante and Petrarch she had brought for her daily reading, also some histories, with her manual of devotion. She had, too, her literary circle of poets, savants, men of letters, prelates, cardinals, and clever women who spoke in Latin and wrote Greek quite naturally and as a matter of course. They talked of manners, art, and philosophy, as at Urbino, but perhaps not quite so seriously; they talked also of love, spiritual and otherwise. The inevitable Bembo was there for a time, and afterward wrote Platonic letters about literature to the friend of his soul, which she answered with insight and discrimination as well as matronly discretion. These letters were preserved, with a lock of her golden hair.

There is little trace of the early Lucrezia in her later years. No more worldly vanities. She prayed a great deal, and spent her evenings in working beautiful designs in embroidery with the ladies of her court. "Her husband and his subjects all loved

her for her gracious manners and her piety," we are told. She was not old when she died,— two or three years past forty,—leaving an inconsolable husband and several children. In a letter of condolence the Doge of Venice gives great praise to her devotion and her fine qualities of character. The most distinguished prelates of the day pay a tribute to her many virtues. The experiences of her life, which were dark enough at its beginning and too surely not blameless, are wrapped in a mystery so deep that we cannot fairly judge them to-day.

If the court of Ferrara was gay, literary, artistic, with more or less of a dilettante tone under Lucrezia, it took quite another color in the reign of her daughter-in-law, the serious and thoughtful Renée. This princess had more solid qualities of intellect, but less beauty and less charm. "She was good and clever, with a mind the best and most acute possible," says Brantôme. Her father was Louis XII, and her mother Anne of Bretagne, whose talent and independent spirit she inherited. She had Protestant tendencies, and brought strange guests to these stately halls and haunts of poets. Calvin was among them. He was young then, and came under the name of Charles d'Espeville—which was much safer for an arch-heretic. With him came Clément Marot, a poet and a heretic of milder type, who shone brilliantly at the court of the clever Marguerite of Navarre. The stern moralist and

ascetic reformer was no friend to women, except as convenient appendages, and these were apt to be troublesome unless kept in their lowly place. He looked upon their government as "a deviation from the original and proper order of nature, to be ranked no less than slavery among the punishments consequent upon the fall of man." In this case he evidently found the punishment rather pleasant, as he stayed many months in a court where the power of women was very much *en évidence*, though it fell under an eclipse because of him. Perhaps he modified his opinions for the moment in so stimulating an atmosphere. While he never fails to denounce the "inferior sex" in plain terms, he is kind enough to make discreet exceptions as to women in high places, who were not made of common clay. It was certainly inconvenient for the duke to have a wife with convictions, who persisted in compromising him with the higher powers; but what would have become of the superior Calvin, with the door closed upon him and the Inquisition on his track, if this incapable being had been superintending the cook and the maids or working patterns in embroidery, as she plainly ought to have been, instead of courageously and with clear foresight despatching some trustworthy friends to liberate the reverend suspect from his dangerous and uncomfortable surveillance, and send him on his way to a freer air?

There was much talk on free will and election, as well as of sinners in power, and the need of grace and reformation, when Vittoria Colonna came, a little later, to enjoy the liberty of thought and literary discussion for which this court was famous, also to forward the interest of her friend, the eloquent Fra Bernardino, who wished to found here a Capuchin convent. It was quite safe to sit on the grass or in the gardens during the long summer evenings, listening to a Greek play, and talking about the respective merits of Homer and Petrarch, who had been dead a long time, or the genius of Ariosto, who had just closed his eyes after charming his age and saying so many agreeable things about its women. But it was not so safe to reflect on wicked popes, or call in question whatever dogma they might choose to present to a credulous world. The Duchess Renée was made sadly conscious of this fact, as was her gifted protégée, Olympia Morata. Her mind had a mystical quality, and the germs of a more spiritual faith had taken root there. But her amiable husband applied the screw as he was told. To have one's children taken away and to be confined in a remote corner of one's castle was too much to bear, and a suspiciously sudden conversion under good orthodox ministrations was the result, with convenient mental reservations to serve until the duke died and the lady was safely back in France with her royal kin

and the protecting sympathy of her heretical friend, the gifted and powerful Marguerite of many-sided fame.

But in the meantime the literary talks went on, led by her brilliant daughters, who contented themselves with topics that were less explosive. Tasso said that Lucrezia and Leonora d'Este were "so well versed in affairs of State and literature that no one could listen to their conversation without amazement." Here, as elsewhere, they talked a great deal about matters of sentiment. Tasso held a controversy at the academy on "Fifty Points of Love." One of them was a question whether men or women love the more constantly and intensely. Orsini Cavaletti, a lady of distinction in literature and philosophy, claimed the palm for her own sex, and came off with equal if not superior honors before a learned and brilliant audience. What the other points were I do not know. The amount of energy expended on such trivial themes was curiously illustrated a few years before by Isotta Nogarola, a lady of Verona, who discussed with learned men the question as to whether Adam or Eve was the more guilty, and wrote a defense of Eve which must have created more than a ripple of interest, as it was printed a century afterward. This champion of justice was not a reformer nor an *emancipée*, but a woman of rank and a friend of popes, who had the courage to come to the rescue

of her sex from the denunciations of ages. Doubtless the discussion was largely a play of wit and an exercise in analysis that applied itself to small things, since it was not safe to attack great ones.

But our unfortunate poet did not confine himself to theory, and love proved a more disastrous subject for him than did religion for some of his friends. It was to this same brilliant Leonora, whom he lauded to the skies, that Tasso dared lift his eyes in too familiar or ambitious a fashion before he was shut out of the world seven years as a madman. Whatever the facts of this tragical romance may have been, we know that the lady died at forty-five, in the odor of sanctity and unmarried, while her gayer but equally clever sister became the wife of the last Duke of Urbino, whom she found so dull and tiresome that she returned after three years to her brother's court, where the livelier tastes were more to her liking. But its glories had already paled and its stars had mostly set. Tasso was the last.

The traveler of to-day looks with curious eye on the faded splendors of the grim old castle, and speculates idly upon the tragedies that have been acted within its silent walls. But he goes away to the poor little cell at the hospital of St. Anna and drops a tear over the fate of the poet who ate his heart out there. Time brings strange reparations, but they are always too late.

V

IN the days when they were talking of men, women, and manners at Urbino, and the brilliant Bembo was writing high-flown letters about literature and celestial love to Lucrezia Borgia, or discoursing upon the same themes, in the intervals of many graver ones, at Ferrara, and Alexander VI was making the society of Rome as wicked as he knew how, which was very wicked indeed, Isabella d'Este, wife of the Marquis of Mantua, was the central figure of one of the most charming and intellectual courts in Italy. This "noble-minded Isabel," of whom Ariosto says,

> I know not well if she more fair
> May be entitled, or more chaste and sage,

carried with her to the banks of the Mincio, already made classic as the birthplace of Vergil, the literary tastes which had been nurtured in the scholarly air of Ferrara. We have seen her developing as a child under the care of the wise Leonora. At six she astonished the envoy sent to arrange her betrothal, by her precocious intelligence, engaging conversation, and graceful manners. It was a kindly fate that led her to the court of the Gonzagas, which was famous for the learning and culture of its women.

Of all the princesses who shed such luster on this period she had, perhaps, the most personal distinction. To the wisdom and force of her mother she added more esprit and a warmer temperament. In tact, dignity, learning, and the virtues of a well-poised character, she did not surpass her husband's sister, the much-loved Duchess Elisabetta of Urbino, but she seems to have had more native brilliancy of intellect. Living from 1474 to 1525, she was brought into familiar contact with the most famous men and women of the golden age of the Renaissance, and played an important part in many of its stormy crises, but, under all conditions, one is impressed with her strong individuality, her versatility, her intrepid spirit, and her unfailing charm. She combined the tenderness of a woman with the mental vigor of a man. Fair, witty, gracious, and a noted beauty, she was equally at home discussing art and literature with the masters, and grave political problems with popes and kings, arranging fêtes, ordering a picture, selecting a brocade, or playing with a child.

The old and imposing palace of Mantua to this day shows traces of the taste and generosity of its most distinguished mistress. She filled it with rare books, exquisite tapestries, and curios of all sorts, chosen with the discrimination of a connoisseur. Its walls were decorated with the masterpieces of Correggio, Mantegna, Perugino, and other great artists whom

she was proud to call her friends. Chief among those in whose conversation she delighted were Titian and Leonardo da Vinci, who immortalized her. A living portrait by the latter is still one of the treasures of the Louvre. Her keen critical taste was quick to divine intrinsic values, and she was always on the alert for fresh talent to add to the glories of her little court. It was not rich, and we find her troubled at the prospect of entertaining her sister's magnificent husband, Lodovico Sforza, who proposed to visit her with a retinue of a thousand or so. But her money went freely for everything pertaining to matters of intellect and taste. She sent her agents in all directions, even to the far East, and a new-found statue, a rare bit of tapestry, or a precious mosaic was an event of joy. Her own teeming imagination was full of pictures, and she liked to suggest themes to artists, which were not always easy to put into living form. But her sympathetic and intelligent enthusiasm was in itself an inspiration.

This critical, art-loving Isabella, however, was more than a dilettante. Her heart went out to every form of suffering. Running over with kindness, and always ready to help the needy and deserving, her sympathies sometimes got the better of her judgment, and more than once she had to regret enlisting her friends in the cause of the unworthy. This generous quality was a part of her

rich temperament. With her intellectual tastes, and the many cares and responsibilities of her position, she was no grave and cold Minerva. We find her everywhere entering into the sports and gaieties of her age with the zest of a woman abounding in spirit, vitality, and the joy of life. When she went to see her sister at Milan, she rode, danced, hunted, made impromptu verses, dazzled her friends with flashes of wit, and fascinated old and young alike with her winning, lively ways. Her powerful brother-in-law was always glad to consult her on serious questions of State, as well as on his vast plans for making a beautiful and artistic city. The things that were shaping themselves in the minds of great artists appealed to her ardent imagination. "This is the school of the *master* and of those who *know*, the home of art and understanding," she wrote from there.

Her letters to her family are always full of vivacity, clear and to the point, but glowing with affection. The friendships she inspired were devoted, even passionate. "It seems as if I had lost not only a tenderly loved sister, but a part of myself," wrote the Duchess Elisabetta, after one of her visits. "I long to write to you every hour. . . . If I could clearly express to you my grief, I am sure it would have so much force that compassion would bring you back." In such a spirit these women wrote to one another. The Latin race is effusive, and the

art of expression, which is its supreme gift, no doubt often ran ahead of the feeling or the thought; but these familiar letters bear the stamp of sincerity and help us to know the manner of woman that wrote them.

This noble lady of so many gifts and graces was born to lead and not to follow. She could take the affairs of government on occasion, and was amply fitted to rule firmly and wisely. Her first aim was to win the love of her people, which, she says, is of "more value to a State than all its fortresses, treasures, and men-at-arms." When her husband had matters to settle that required delicate diplomacy, he sent her on a special embassy to the Vatican, where the Pope loaded her with honors and had Bibbiena's new comedy, "Calandra," played for her entertainment. A helpful wife was this queen of the Renaissance, and no one knew it better than her husband, whose profession was war, which often led him far from the court she had made so famous. Perhaps she had a trace of pardonable vanity. She deferred a visit to Venice because she did not care to have her modest train brought into so close a contrast with the imposing splendors of the "little sister" whom she loved but did not attempt to rival on her own ground. The glories she most sought were of the intellect and not to be bought with money.

The distinctive quality she impressed upon her

court was an artistic one. Its art treasures were of the choicest, and the best plays, classical or modern, were brought out there. Music was her passion. She sang well herself, also played the lute and viol. In the days before Palestrina had opened a new world of harmony, she maintained one of the finest orchestras in Italy. No gifted musician ever appealed to her in vain. But there was no field of thought in her time which she did not explore. If her knowledge was not profound, it was wide, and she looked at things largely from a human point of view, not superficially, but sympathetically. She applied her intelligence and her talents not only to the advancement of the fine arts, to the cultivation of the best in literature, to the interests of her people, but to the art of living with due regard for one's duties and responsibilities to the future as well as to the present. If Vittoria Colonna represents the highest thought of her age as applied to things spiritual and literary, Isabella d'Este is a living example of its finest mundane side. No one better illustrates the power and the penetrating fragrance of a strong and vivid personality. It is a type that has many imitators, but such a gift, which is an assemblage of many gifts, cannot be copied.

A court dominated by so rare a spirit, and attracting all the refinement, talent, and intelligence of a brilliant age, could not be otherwise than luminous.

We have no record of its conversations, but we know that its standards were high, and that the best passports of admission there were achievements of the intellect. Rank no doubt had its place, and manners were indispensable, but to genius and learning much was forgiven. Purely material splendors had small weight. Some of its princes had left traditions of culture, but it was a woman of intellect, force, independence, and charm who gathered these into a society that proved a center of light which shone brightly on after generations.

VI

Of scarcely less interest than Isabella d'Este is her sister Beatrice, the fresh, dark-eyed, dark-haired, gay, and laughing girl who went to Milan at fifteen as the bride of Lodovico Sforza, and died before she was twenty-two, after condensing the experiences of a lifetime in a few short years. This court has left the record of much sin and many tragedies, and it furnished some great princesses to the smaller and less imposing ones, but its literary glory was not so conspicuous as its splendor and its crimes. A court that numbered Bramante and Leonardo da Vinci among its stars, however, is not to be passed lightly. These colossal men were not easy to command, and prince as well as princess often appealed to them in vain. It

is not likely that they gave much precious time to courtly pleasures, as the first order of genius thrives better in solitude or the sympathetic companionship of the few, though Leonardo was much sought after for his personal accomplishments. But the inspiration of an intelligent woman has more to do with the results of genius than an unthinking and altogether material world is apt to imagine. The Duchess Beatrice was the moving spirit at Milan when its greatest artists were creating the monuments that were to be its lasting glory. Under her critical eye, too, the architects, painters, sculptors, and decorators made the church and cloisters of Certosa things of imperishable beauty, happily unconscious that they were building and carving the tomb of the little lady who was so gracious and so appreciative.

These artistic tastes, which she shared with her sister, were inherited from her mother, and they were fostered in the court of her grandfather at Naples, where she spent her childhood. At Ferrara she was a trifle overshadowed by the more gifted and beautiful Isabella, but she still lived in a stimulating atmosphere. From a worldly point of view it was a brilliant prospect that opened before the young girl when she went away from classical Ferrara as the child-wife of a man she had never seen. On the personal side the clouds were dark, but that inner realm in which lies happiness or misery was never considered. The formidable Lodovico

was certainly not good, but he had the cultivated tastes of his time, and magnificent projects, into which the small but clever duchess entered with enthusiasm. With grace, generosity, a fine intellect, and a singularly brave and vigorous character, she captivated at once the heart of the blasé prince, who had been none too well pleased with the policy of her coming. No one loved better the pageants, tournaments, and amusements of her age. No one rode more fearlessly, hunted with more zest, or danced with more pleasure. She pursued everything with the ardor of youth and a happy temperament. But her careful training had not been in vain. This fifteen-year-old wife reserved her leisure hours for serious things. She had a fine literary as well as artistic taste, and filled her cabinet with rare and costly books. It is common enough to collect costly books which are never read, but not so common for pleasure-loving girls to take delight in the masters of literature. Even in our enlightened day they are apt to prefer novels, and usually very poor ones. Doubtless the Duchess Beatrice had learned advisers, but she knew how to select them, which is in itself a talent. There were many men of letters about the court, and some of them read to her while she was busy with her needle, just as others used to do in the old days at Ferrara. They did not read the last romance, but great poems, sometimes the "Divine Comedy," sometimes Petrarch,

sometimes later verses, or histories. The grand Lodovico often stole in to listen, and gave thoughtful attention, especially to the greater master. Perhaps he recalled those happy moments in his sad captivity when the only thing he asked was a copy of Dante to while away the long and lonely hours in a French prison.

In the quiet summer days, among the groves and fountains of Vigevano or Pavia, when the dripping of the water and the rustling of the leaves made a sweet accompaniment for the strains of the orchestra that floated away past the tree-tops and lost themselves in the upper air, we find her listening to an animated discussion between Bramante and Gaspari Visconti on the relative merits of Dante and Petrarch, with her own sympathies on the side of the more spiritual poet. It was this same Visconti who said that the talents and virtues of the discriminating duchess surpassed those of the greatest women of antiquity. Giuliano de' Medici also speaks of her as a woman of "wonderful parts." Poets, artists, and singers flocked to her for patronage and recognition from many countries, sure of a generous sympathy.

Nor were her tastes and abilities limited to things gay, artistic, and literary. She had a clear head and a facile talent. When scarcely more than eighteen her husband sent her on a diplomatic mission to Venice, where she spoke with grace

and dignity before the doge and seigniory on a matter of politics. No one questioned her modesty in doing so, and every one praised her wise and tactful eloquence. She confesses to a little tremulous apprehension, but writes in a naïve and artless way of her cordial reception by the councilors, also of the magnificent fêtes given in her honor.

In the troubled days of Milan, when the aspiring Lodovico proved weak and faint-hearted, it was his brave little wife who went with him to the camp, reconciled the differences among the officers, and inspired the soldiers with her own courage and enthusiasm. In the final crisis, at this time, it was still the young and fearless woman who took prompt measures to defend the city after her husband had fled and left her to bear all the burdens alone. It is not a question here whether he was right or wrong. The morals of politics were worse then, if possible, than they are now, and he had at least a powerful following. On a matter of public policy it is clear enough that she could not lead a party in opposition to him. What she thought we do not know, though her courage and her swift resources showed the quality of the woman.

Many were the sad hours this inconstant husband gave her, but when she was gone in the freshness of her innocent youth, he put himself and everything about him in sable, refused to be comforted,

and mourned her the rest of his life. In spite of his wandering fancies, which she had the spirit to curb, he said that he loved her better than himself, —which, if true, was saying a great deal,—and that she had been his adored companion no less in the cares of State than in his hours of ease. That she shared his cruelties is not supposable from anything we know of her character, but it is certain that he owed to her taste and counsel much of his reputation as an enlightened ruler who crowned his city with the glories of art.

With her loss his star began to wane. "When the Duchess Beatrice died, everything fell into ruin. The court, which had been a paradise of joy, became a dark and gloomy inferno; poets and artists were forced to seek another place." So writes a man of letters, in the last days of the fifteenth century, of a woman of twenty-one who had tried to make the richest and worst court in Italy a home for literature, art, and all that makes for the intellectual good of the race.

VII

If I have lingered a little over personal details in these brief sketches, it is the better to show the versatile character of the women who shed so much luster on the golden age of the Renaissance. Of the relative moral value of these representative

women of their time I think there is little question, in spite of the fact that the age is so persistently quoted to prove that women degenerate in virtue as they advance in intelligence. That the tone of morality was very low, that vice was scarcely frowned upon, that men in power and out of it broke every commandment in the decalogue without compunction or even taking the trouble to put on a veil of respectability, and that a large class of women were swept into the vortex of corruption, is true enough. But it is also true that the strongest protest against this state of affairs was made by women, and that the few prelates who dared lift their voices against the scandals in high places numbered their most zealous assistants among them. To say nothing of the multitudes who cast their jewels and ornaments into the flames at the bidding of Savonarola, and consecrated themselves to a pure and simple if not ascetic life,—all of which may be set down to the account of emotionalism rather than intelligence,—it was the women most noted for talent and learning, whether princess, poet, or university professor, who were most honored for their virtues. The pure-minded Contarini found in Vittoria Colonna his strongest support in a hopeless struggle against the sins and corruptions of the church. Olympia Morata was a conspicuous example of great intellect and great learning put to the service of a bettered humanity at serious, indeed fatal,

personal sacrifice. And she was not alone. There were numbers of these women—poets, scholars, and thinkers—who lived spotless lives and worked for the good of their sex and race.

Of the noble ladies who presided over the literary courts, the few we have recalled were among the greatest, and, with one exception, it is generally conceded that their lives were without reproach. Others were victims of a power over which they had no control. It must be remembered that these women, however capable or high in place, were in the last resort subject to the will of men. Their new intelligence had made them helpers to be respected, and tempered a little the possible tyranny of their self-constituted masters, but men themselves, the nobler and wiser, saw the dangers in the abuse of their own power. "If women corrupt, they have first been corrupted by their age," said Giuliano de' Medici, the best and purest of his family, in one of the conversations at Urbino, which, thanks to its women, had not only the most intelligent but the most virtuous court in Italy.

When a Borgia or some other pope equally devoid of moral sense, who sits at the head of Christendom and directs its conscience, orders at pleasure the marriage and divorce of his own daughter, or of any other woman who can serve his political or mercenary ends, giving her no choice and no recourse; when Imperias and Tullias pre-

side over the salons of Rome because etiquette forbids a pure and high-minded woman to live in this lax society of prelates and cardinals, which she would be likely to find neither safe nor agreeable, there is little to be said about the connection between woman's intelligence and moral decadence. Imperias and Tullias have lived in all ages, and they have flourished best where good women were the most ignorant and colorless. Some of them have had talent and esprit. They have sung, acted, danced, written sonnets, affected learning, patronized the arts, even put on the garb of virtue and piety; but they can be no more cited as representatives of the women of centuries ago than the same class to-day can be taken as a measure of our own moral standards, which is clearly impossible. Intelligence was never a guaranty of morals, as the mind can be sharpened for bad ends as well as good ones. It is even possible that the woman of education and strong mental fiber may be more easily led into the sins of ambition, but she is far less likely to drift into the follies of vanity, passion, and a weak will than the ignorant one who has no rational outlet for her energies and her untempered sensibilities. The faults, too, of a luminous age are seen in a glare of light that is wholly wanting in periods of darkness when vice shelters itself behind closed doors upon which it too often hangs the drapery of virtue.

THE LITERARY COURTS

It is difficult to measure the intellectual value of the women of the Renaissance, as their influence went out in a thousand rills, seen and unseen, to fertilize after-ages, and not least our own. There were many good writers, but no great ones, unless we except Vittoria Colonna, whose poems, though unequal, were of a high and intrinsic literary as well as moral quality. As an *in memoriam* her sonnets to her husband are not likely to die, and as the first collection of sacred poems her later work has a distinct and honorable place on the world's records. Why there were no artists of note is a problem not easy to solve, as the field is one in which women seem especially fitted to excel. Elisabetta Sirani might have won a high place on the roll of fame, as great critics were struck with her vigor, her grasp of large subjects, her facile style, and her careful finish; but she lived in the decline of art, and died at twenty-six Women were more famous as scholars, and many of them stood on a level with distinguished men. Educated with them in the best schools, their tastes were formed on the best models. A lady who converses or lectures before learned dons in Latin, and writes the purest Greek, is not a shallow pretender, though she may be neither original nor profound. Nor do they seem to have been pedants, though much of the phraseology of both men and women strikes us now as stilted and inflated; it

was the style of the day. No doubt there was more or less dilettantism, which was a weakness of the time that ended in the destruction of literary values; it is quite possible, too, that many liked what it was the fashion to like, as they have done in all ages, without any clear tastes or convictions of their own, though this foible is by no means confined to women. That period, like our own, had its army of pale imitators who follow in the wake of every movement that is likely to reflect on them a small degree of honor, and in the end sink its finest standards in hopeless mediocrity.

But the influence of a multitude of highly educated and intelligent women is too subtle and far-reaching to put into definite terms. To trace it in its large results, even if this were possible, would take us far beyond our present limits. It is felt at every moment, in the home, in society, in amusements, in the church. It directs the currents of men's lives from the starting-point, it infolds them like light, it is a stimulant and an inspiration. But no one knows precisely where it begins or ends. This is why it has been so ignored, why men, except in individual cases, have so persistently depreciated the qualities that opened for them the way to the finest issues.

The direct power of the learned princesses of the literary courts is more readily seen. By virtue of their position, as well as their talents, they

created a society, spread a taste for things of the intellect, and did a great deal to curb the vice and cruelty which pressed with special severity on their own sex. If they could not change the drift of the age, and were subject to conditions which good men were unable to control, they tempered and modified them. The whole Platonic movement, which they did so much to foster, was a protest against the sensualism that has always been their worst enemy. To sustain a spiritual cult in a race that worshiped, before all things, material beauty was not easy. It had a tendency always to lose itself in phrases and mystical subtleties, but it put woman on a new pedestal, and social life on a higher plane. We have only to note the bacchanalian revels of the poets, wits, and philosophers of Florence, the orgies of folly, vulgarity, and sin which the great Lorenzo led and the very wise Platonic Academy smiled upon, to learn the difference between a lettered society of men without the tempering influence of high-minded women, and the brilliant circles we have seen gathered about princesses of learning, refinement, and grace, who guided its amusements and restrained its license. No woman of conspicuous virtue and ability has left a permanent stamp on the social life of Florence. Clarice, the wife of the versatile Lorenzo, had many virtues, but she was evidently in no sense a leader. Poliziano has no prejudice against learned women, as he

falls in love with the gifted and beautiful Alessandra Scala and is inconsolable because she will not marry him. He also pays court to Cassandra Fidelis, and corresponds with Lucrezia, the mother of his patron, who is finely educated and writes poetry; but he is angry when Clarice interferes with his manner of training her children, " because she is a woman and unlettered "; indeed, he quarrels with her about it and goes away. She, in her turn, finds fault with his pagan morals, and is glad to be rid of his presence, no doubt with good reason. But whatever she may have been as a mother, she seems to have lacked the talent or the desire to gather about her a lettered society, and the result is seen in the disgraceful orgies of her husband and his clever satellites, with no advantage to the " unhampered intellects " of these poets and savants, but with a decided disadvantage to their manners and morals.

It was during the reign of pure, highly educated, and able women that the Italian courts reached their highest point of power and brilliancy. When, by the accident of succession, those of smaller caliber and more frivolous tastes took the scepter, they invariably declined and lost their prestige.

It is quite superfluous to cast a mantle of charity, or any mantle whatever, over the crimes of the Renaissance, but I have tried in a small way to recall another side of its abounding life, which had its

roots largely in the character of its forceful and intelligent women. The age that gave us a Bianca Capello gave us also a Vittoria Colonna. The one has long since been consigned to the fitful oblivion of infamy; the other holds her imperishable place among the stars, still lighting the sorrowful and world-weary with her messages of love and hope. The centuries of beauty and sin when men like to say that woman lost her birthright of virtue—a birthright which they never ceased to invade from their own stronghold of power—saw her transfigured by the imagination of Michelangelo into the immortal sibyls who sit side by side with the prophets in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel, pure and passionless, with the brooding eyes that long ago fathomed all the secrets of a suffering world, read in the mystic leaves the records of nations still unborn, and saw from afar the light of the ages—unchanging types of the wisdom and divination that lie in the feminine soul. It saw, too, the Virgins of Fra Angelico, unfading symbols of purity as of angelic sweetness; and the Madonnas of Raphael, looking wistfully out of their repose with a ray of celestial love in their eyes and a smile of eternal beauty on their lips.

VIII

IT is no part of the plan here to trace the causes of the decadence in which men lost their liberty of

thought and women their position. Greed of money, greed of power, love of pleasure, the growth of luxury, and the low ideals that surely follow in their train, brought their logical results. The flower of estheticism that expands in the rich splendors of its ripe perfection verges already toward its dissolution. Then the Roman Catholic reaction, which forbade men to think, sent women back to prayers and seclusion, as a business instead of a resource; it was becoming, and quite safe. But the Italian princesses had set a fashion of knowledge, and of putting society on an intellectual plane, with what trimming of beauty and adornment of manners they could add. The irrepressible and many-gifted Marguerite of Navarre took it up with various changes and originalities of her own. The clever Frenchwomen saw their opportunity, and when the courts were sunk in vice and inanities, they drew out of the past its secret of social power, and created the literary salon, which was one of the glories of the golden age of France. The wave of knowledge which had raised the Italian women so high, and then so strangely receded, culminated again in the intellectual brilliancy and unparalleled influence of the Frenchwomen of the eighteenth century. The rise and fall of this movement and its central figures I have treated quite fully elsewhere. Again the wave receded, with the coming of the republic, to revive under other forms in our

own country and our own day. Will another decadence follow? The future alone can tell, and no prophetic sibyl has read the secret of that future. Possibly it will depend largely upon the poise and sanity of women themselves.

SALON AND WOMAN'S CLUB

SALON AND WOMAN'S CLUB

• New Mania for Knowledge •

• Women's Clubs as Central Points •

• Parallel between the Literary Salon and the Woman's Club •

• French and American Women •

• Attitude of Anglo-Saxon Men toward Women •

• Puritan Gospel of Feminine Liberty •

• The Woman's Club not a School of Manners •

• Its Moral Value •

• Its Social and Intellectual Value •

• Imitation Culture •

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SALON AND WOMAN'S CLUB

I

IT is not too much to say that the entire present generation of women is going to school. Infancy cultivates its mind in the kindergarten, while the woman of threescore seeks consolation and diversion in clubs or a university course, instead of resigning herself to seclusion and prayers, or the chimney-corner and knitting, after the manner of her ancestors. Even our amusements carry instruction in solution. Childhood takes in knowledge through its toys and games; the débutante discusses Plato or Coquelin in the intervals of the waltz; youth and maturity alike find their pleasure in papers, talks, plays, music, and recitations. In these social menus everything is included, from a Greek drama or an Oriental faith to Wagner and the latest theory of economics. We have Kipling

at breakfast, Rostand or Maeterlinck at luncheon, and the new Utopia at dinner. After a brilliant day of being adored and talked about, Browning has been duly labeled and put away, but Homer classes and Dante classes still alternate with lectures on the Impressionists or the Decadents. In this rage for knowledge, science and philosophy are not forgotten. Fashion ranges the field from occultism to agnosticism, from the qualities of a microbe to the origin of man. To-day it searches the problems of this world, to-morrow the mysteries of the next. There is nothing too large or too abstruse for the eager, questioning spirit that seeks to know all things, or at least to skim the surface of all things.

Nor is this energetic pursuit of intelligence confined to towns or cities. Go into the remote village or hamlet, and you will find the inevitable club, where the merits of the last novel, the labor problem, the political situation, the silver question, the Boer war, and the state of the universe generally, are canvassed by a circle of women as freely, and with as keen a zest, as the virtues and shortcomings of their neighbors were talked over by their grandmothers — possibly may be still by a few of their benighted contemporaries.

In its extent, this mania for things of the intellect is phenomenal. One might imagine that we were rapidly becoming a generation of pedants. Perhaps we are saved from it by the perpetual change that

gives nothing time to crystallize. The central points of all this movement are the women's clubs, of which the social element is a conspicuous feature, and we take our learning so comfortably diluted and pleasantly varied that it ceases to be formidable, though on the side of learning it may leave much to be desired.

But it is notably in this mingling of literature and life that women have always found their greatest intellectual influence, and the club is not likely to prove an exception. The rapidity of its growth is equaled only by the extent of its range. Of women's clubs there is literally no end, and they are yet in their vigorous youth. We have literary clubs, and art clubs, and musical clubs; clubs for science, and clubs for philanthropy; parliamentary clubs, and suffrage clubs, and anti-suffrage clubs—clubs of every variety and every grade, from the luncheon club, with its dilettante menu, and the more pretentious chartered club, that aims at mastering a scheme of the world, to the simple working-girls' club, which is content with something less: and all in the sacred name of culture. They multiply, federate, hold conventions, organize congresses, and really form a vast educational system that is fast changing old ideals and opening possibilities of which no prophetic eye can see the end. That they have marvelously raised the average standard of intelligence cannot be questioned, nor

that they have brought out a large number of able and interesting women who have generously taken upon themselves not only their own share of the work of the world, but a great deal more.

One can hardly overrate the value of an institution which has given light and an upward impulse to so many lives, and changed the complexion of society so distinctly for the better. But it may be worth while to ask if the women of to-day, with their splendid initiative and boundless aspirations, are not going a little too fast, getting entangled in too much machinery, losing their individuality in masses, assuming more responsibility than they can well carry. Why is it that lines too deep for harmonious thought are so early writing themselves on the strong, tense, mobile, and delicate faces of American women? Why is it that the pure joy of life seems to be lost in the restless and insatiable passion for multitudes, so often thinly disguised as love for knowledge, which is not seldom little more than the shell and husk of things? Is the pursuit of culture degenerating into a pursuit of clubs, and are we taking for ourselves new taskmasters more pitiless than the old? "The emancipation of woman is fast becoming her slavery," said one who was caught in the whirl of the social machinery and could find no point of repose. We pride ourselves on our liberty; but the true value of liberty is to leave people free from a pressure that prevents

their fullest growth. What do we gain if we simply exchange one tyranny for another? Apart from the fact that the finest flowers of culture do not spring from a soil that is constantly turned, any more than they do from a soil that is not turned at all, it is a question of human limitations, of living so as to continue to live, of growing so as to continue to grow. Nor is it simply a matter of individuals. Societies, too, exhaust themselves; and those which reach an exaggerated growth in a day are apt to perish in a day. It is not the first time in the history of the world that there has been a brilliant reign of intelligence among women, though perhaps there was never one so widely spread as now. Why have they ended in more or less violent reactions? We may not be able to answer the question satisfactorily, but it gives us food for reflection.

II

THE most remarkable, though by no means the only, precedent we have for a social organization planned by women on a basis of the intellect, was the French literary salon of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These women had relatively as much intelligence as we have, and possibly more power. It must be taken into consideration that they were remote from us by race, religion, and political régime, as well as by several generations of time, and

that their spirit, aims, and methods were as unlike ours as their points of view. But that which they did on traditional lines and a small scale we are doing on new lines and a very large scale. Their intellectual life found its outlet in the salon, as ours does in the club. These equally represent the active influence of women in their respective ages. Both have resulted in a mania for knowledge, a change of ideals, a radical revolution in social life, and an unprecedented increase in the authority of women. As they have certain tendencies and dangers in common, it may be of interest to trace a few points of resemblance and contrast between them; also to glance at the elements which have gone into the club and are making it so considerable a factor in American life.

The salon, like the club, was founded and led by clever women in the interests of culture, both literary and social; but, unlike the club, it was devoted to bringing into relief the talents of men. The difference, so far as manners are concerned, is a fundamental one. It would never have occurred to the women of that age to band together for self-improvement. If they had given the matter a thought, it would not have seemed to them likely to come in that way; still less would it have occurred to them that this mode of doing things could be of any service in bettering the world or their own position. Rousseau, who wrote so many fine phrases

about liberty, and left women none at all, not even the small privilege of protesting against injustice, said that they were "made to please men"; and it is safe to say that the Frenchwomen had no scheme of life apart from men, until they were ready to go into seclusion for prayer and penance and preparation for the next world. They accepted the fact that men had the ordering of affairs, and that they could make their own influence felt only by acting through them. "What is the difference whether women rule, or the rulers are guided by women?" said Aristotle. "If the power is in their hands, the result is the same." It was simply a question of the best way of ruling the rulers. In this case the rulers were of a race that has not only a great liking for women in the concrete, but a great admiration for woman in the abstract. So long as her gifts are consecrated to his interest and pleasure, the Frenchman never objects to them—indeed, he is disposed to pay much homage to them. In the interest of some one else, or even in her own, it is another matter. They might be inconvenient. But in this new kingdom of the salon he was quite willing to accord her the supremacy, since she gave him the place of honor and furnished an effective background for his talents without too much parading her own. He had only to shine and be applauded. What more could he desire?

Naturally, under such conditions, among the first

of her arts was that of making things agreeable. If she had any fine moral lessons to inculcate, she gave them in the form of sugared pills that were pleasant to take. In her category of virtues the social ones were uppermost; but they were the means to an end, and this end must not be lost sight of. Her special mission was to correct coarse manners and bad morals, as well as to secure due recognition for talent; but she went about it in her own way. It may be said that, as a rule, the Frenchwoman is much less interested in *what* is done than in *how* it is done. In the early days of the salons she concerned herself little, if at all, with theories and grave social problems; but she did concern herself very much with questions of taste and manners, the refinements of language and literature, the subtleties of sentiment, the dignity of converse between men and women. Nor did she bring to these questions an untrained mind. If she did not make so much of a business of improving it as we do, she did not neglect private study and the reading of the best books, which, though few, were undiluted. "It gives dull colors to the mind to have no taste for solid reading," said Mme. de Sévigné, who delighted in Montaigne and Pascal, Tacitus and Vergil, with various other classics which are not exactly the food for frivolity. These women did not always spell correctly, and would have declined altogether to write a paper on the

"Science of Government" or the "Philosophy of Confucius,"—subjects which the school-girls of to-day feel quite competent to treat,—but they showed surprising clearness and penetration in their criticisms of literature and manners. The coteries which formed an audience for Corneille, sympathized with the exalted thought of Pascal and Arnauld, helped to modify and polish the maxims of La Rochefoucauld,—as those which, a century or so later, discussed the tragedies of Voltaire or the philosophy of Rousseau with men of genius who would have had small patience with platitudes,—needed no lowering of levels to suit their taste or comprehension. They were held firmly to fine literary ideals. All they asked was simplicity of statement, and this was made a fashion, to the lasting benefit of French literature.

It is true that the movement of the salon was in the direction of a brilliant social as well as a brilliant intellectual life; but to fuse such varied materials, to unite men of action and men of letters, nobles and philosophers, statesmen and poets, people within the pale and people outside of it, in a harmonious society, presided over by women who set up new standards and new codes of manners, meant more than intelligence, more than social charm. It involved diplomacy of a high order, which implies flexibility, penetration, and the subtler qualities of the intellect, as well as tact, sympathy, and know-

ledge of men. This was notably an outgrowth of the salon, where women owed much of their influence to a quick perception of the fine shades of temperament, genius, interest, and passion through which the world is swayed. The result of such training was a mind singularly lucid, great administrative ability, and a character full of the intangible quality that we call charm. If it was a trifle weak as to moral fiber, this may be largely laid to the standards of the time, which were not ours. Mme. du Deffand put the philosophy of her age and race into an epigram when she said that " the virtues are superior to the sentiments, but not so agreeable." Both temperament and education led these women toward Hellenic ideals. The latter-day woman is inclined to look upon their methods as trivial and their attitude as humiliating; but, whatever we may think of their point of view, we must admit their masterly ability in making vital changes for the better, and attaining a position of influence which we have hardly yet secured for ourselves. They did much more than form society, create a code of manners, and set the fashions, which we are apt to look upon as their special province. They refined the language, stimulated talent, gave fresh life to literature, exacted a new respect for women, and held political as well as social and academic honors in their hands.

If they sometimes dipped into affairs of state in

support of their friends, and with a too incidental reference to the interests of the State, I am not sure that even the men of our own time are absolutely free from a personal tinge of the same sort, without the saving grace of altruism. At all events, in the pursuit of a better order of things, they took the pleasant path around the mountain rather than the doubtful and untrodden path over it, which, since they could not go over it if they tried, was, to my thinking, the wiser way.

III

BUT other times, other conditions and other methods. It was a long step from these fine ladies in rouge and ruffles to the earnest American women of high aims and simpler lives who, not far from thirty years ago, began seriously to group themselves in clubs for social fellowship and mental culture. The difference is equally marked, now that these gatherings are numbered by thousands. It is more vital than a variation in manners, as it lies in the character of the two races.

The club had no prestige of a class behind it, and concerned itself little with traditions. It was a far more radical departure from the old order than the salon, which, though it established a new social basis, did it through delicate compromises that left the aristocratic spirit intact. It was only in its

later days that the iconoclasts invaded it, to some extent, and made it a sort of hotbed for the propagation of democratic theories which seemed quite harmless until, one day, a spark set them ablaze, and the generation that had played with them was swept to destruction. The club was democratic from the foundation. It did not revolve round men of letters, or men of any class. There was no man, or influence of man, behind it—no man in the vista. It does not aim to bring into relief the talents of men, but the talents of women who had come, perhaps, to wish a little glory on their own account. There was no longer an outlet for their activities in the salon, which belonged neither to the genius of the age nor the genius of the race. The Anglo-Saxon man is not preëminently a social being, and though he has not been entirely neglected in the matter of vanity or personal susceptibility, he has rather less of either than his Gallic compeers. Nor is he so amenable, either by temperament or training, to the delicate arts that make social life agreeable. Half a century or so ago, the American, in whose chivalrous regard for women we take so much pride, was in the habit of saying many fine things about them in what he was pleased to call the sphere God had assigned them; indeed, he went so far as to offer a great deal of theoretical incense to them as household divinities, with special and very human limitations as to privileges. But

he frowned distinctly upon any intellectual tastes or aspirations. His attitude was tersely and modestly expressed in Tennyson's couplet:

> She knows but matters of the house,
> And he, he knows a thousand things.

This master of diverse knowledge would have smiled at the notion of finding either profit or amusement in meeting women for the purpose of conversation on the plane of the intellect. The few rare exceptions only emphasize this fact. "A woman, if she have the misfortune of knowing anything, should conceal it as well as she can," said Jane Austen. We are far from that time; but men of affairs even now find literary talks in the drawing-room tiresome, and persistently stay away. Thoughts, too, had become a commodity with a market value, and men of letters no longer found their pleasure or interest in wasting them on limited coteries. They preferred sending them out to a larger audience, at so much a page, while they smoked and chatted more at their ease among themselves at their clubs. Whether they did not find women inspiring,—which, under such conditions, is quite possible,—or did not care to be inspired in that way, the rôle of inspirer was clearly ended. The few efforts to take up the fallen scepter of the salon proved futile in intellectual prestige, though they may have served to while away some

pleasant hours. A society based upon wealth without the traditions of culture is apt to smother in accessories the delicacy of insight and the esprit which were the life of the salons. On the other hand, those who pose as apostles of plain living and high thinking make the mistake of ignoring the imagination altogether, and too often serve their feasts of reason without any sauces at all, which fact should probably be laid to the account of the race that takes its diversion as seriously as its work. After all, one cannot say "Let us have esprit," and have it, any more than one can say, "Let us have charm," and put it on like a garment.

But the women of forty or fifty years ago lacked much more than a social outlet for their talents and aspirations. They had no outlet of any sort beyond charity and the fireside. The Frenchwomen had little, if any, more real freedom, possibly not so much in some directions: but rank brought them deference and consideration; the age of chivalry had put them on a pedestal. It may have been a bit theoretical, but an illusory power is better than none at all, as it has a certain prestige. If they were queens without a very substantial kingdom, they had, at least, the privileges, as well as the responsibilities, of high positions, and shone with something more than reflected glory. Then their talents were too valuable to be ignored, as they were the best of purveyors to Gallic ambitions. The

Roman Church, too, was far-seeing when it provided an outlet for their surplus energies and emotions. If they had no fireside of their own, or the world pressed heavily upon them, they could retire from it, and hope for places of influence, even of power, in some of the various religious orders. In any case, there were peace and a dignified refuge. But it is a noteworthy fact that the Reformation left to women all the sacrifices of their religion, and none of its outward honors or consolations. If the philosophers had no message of freedom for them, still less was it found on Puritan soil. "Women are frail, impatient, feeble, and foolish," said John Knox, who was far from being a model of patience himself, and seems to have been singularly swayed by these weak, inconsequent creatures above whom he asserts that man is placed "as God is above the angels." Milton has left us in no doubt as to his position regarding them:

> My author and dispenser, what thou bidst
> Unargued I obey: so God ordains;
> God is thy law, thou mine: to know no more
> Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise.

Such was the Puritan gospel of liberty as applied to women. John Knox and Milton joined in the chorus that glorified their vassalage, while Calvin added a cordial refrain, with a prudent reservation as to queens and princesses.

SALON AND WOMAN'S CLUB

It is needless to dwell upon this phase of a past the ideals of which are as dead to us as the goddesses of Greece and the heroines of the Nibelungenlied. It has been sufficiently emphasized already, and concerns us here only as it shows us the spirit under which our grandmothers were born and bred. It cannot be denied that they were a wise, strong race, rearing thinkers and statesmen who have left few worthy successors, though they did not spend much time in discussing the best methods of training children, were better versed in domestic than social economics, and doubtless had misty ideas about Buddhism and the ultimate destiny of Woman. It may be superfluous, also, to say that many of them had occasion to think little of their restrictions, and would have resented the suggestion that they had any which were not good for them, if not positively desirable. Limitations, even hardships, do not necessarily imply misery. People are curiously flexible, and get a sort of happiness from trying to fit themselves to conditions which, though unpleasant, are inevitable. Then, conditions are not always hard because they have unlimited possibilities in that direction. One may even wear a chain and ball quite comfortably so long as one stands still, or if the chain be a silken one and the ball cast in pleasant places. The difficulty is that one does not always wish to stand still; nor is it always possible, whatever the inclination

may be. The march of events is irresistible, and one is often forced to a change of position to escape being trampled upon. Besides, in a society that is based upon the right of people to do as they choose within certain very flexible limits, one half is not likely to continue to do, without a protest, what the other half says it ought to do, when it is compelled to take its full share of burdens and rather more than its full share of sacrifices, without any choice as to cakes and ale. These daughters of liberty held no longer the places of honor accorded to rank, and were not only without visible dignities of any kind, except as the palest of satellites, but were largely, if not altogether, excluded from the intellectual life of their husbands. They were told to be content with the dignity of maternity, while they were virtually shut out from the things that consecrate maternity. It was under such conditions that the woman's club was born. Men had already set up clubs of their own, and women had no choice but to do the same thing, or drift into the hopeless position of their respectable Athenian sisters of the classic age, who lived in fashionable but ignorant seclusion, while their brilliant husbands sought more congenial companionship elsewhere.

But women did not plan a club for amusement, as men have usually done: they planned it for mental improvement. It was not without a prophecy of the coming time that the characters of our grand-

mothers were trained in so severe a school. They were the reverse of pleasure-loving, and took even their diversions seriously. The central point of their lives was an inexorable sense of duty. Its twin trait was energy. With a radical change of ideals their daughters did not lose these traits. A religious devotion to one set of aims was simply transferred to another. The road to their new Utopia was knowledge. All things would come in its train — culture, independence, happiness, the power to help a suffering world. It was this leaven of Puritan traditions which gave the club an element that was not found in the salon. The American woman may lack a little of that elusive quality, half sensibility, half wit, which makes so much of the Frenchwoman's charm; she may lack, too, her perfection of tact, her inborn genius for form and measure: but she has what the Frenchwoman has not—something that belongs to a race in which the ethical overshadows the artistic. It is devotion to principles rather than to persons, to essentials rather than to forms. Her pursuit of knowledge may often be superficial, from the immensity of the field she lays out for herself; but her aims are serious, and lead her toward moral and sociological questions, rather than matters of sentiment and taste.

The woman's club is not a school of manners, and concerns itself little with the fine art of living. It claims to instruct, not to amuse — or, rather, it seeks

amusement in that way; and it is more interested in doing things than in the modes of doing them. It does not rely upon diplomacy to gain its ends, but upon the wisdom and justice of the ends, appealing to the reason instead of the imagination. It also deals more with masses than with individuals. No doubt, the necessity of going outside the realm of personal feeling in managing public or semi-public affairs helps to give the poise and self-command which go far toward offsetting the intensity of temperament that has always made the discussion of vital questions so perilous in gatherings of women, though we have occasion enough to know that wisdom and sanity do not invariably preside at gatherings of men, even supposably wise ones. The qualities fostered by the club are energy, earnestness, independence, versatility, and—not exactly intellectual conscience, which implies traditional standards, but a sense of intellectual duty that is not quite the same thing. All this is remote from the spirit of the salon, with its social codes and conventions, its graceful amenities, its sparkling wit, its play of sentiment, its diplomatic reserves, and its clear intelligence working through endless private channels toward a new order of things. It points to the club, not as a conservator of social traditions, or a creator of social standards, or a tribunal of criticism, but as a literary and political training-school, a maker of citizens with a broader outlook into the

world of affairs, a powerful engine of moral force. Perhaps its greatest direct value at present lies in this moral force, which is the outgrowth of centuries of 'sternly moral heritage, and runs not only through philanthropic channels, but through all the avenues of life.

Of scarcely less importance are the impulse and direction the club has given to the administrative talents of women—talents which mark their special strength, and are far too valuable to be ignored at a time when all the wisdom of the world is needed, in private as well as in public affairs, to guide it safely through its threatening storms.

IV

BUT it is of the intellectual and social value of the club that I wish more especially to speak here. It is often asked by thoughtful foreigners why American women, who are free to pursue any career they like, with ample privileges of education and the universal reign of the literary club, have produced no writers of the first order, measured even by the standards of their own sex. One finds many clever ones, and a few able ones, but no Jane Austen, no George Eliot, no Mme. de Staël, no Mrs. Browning. This may be partly due to the fact that we have not yet passed the period of going to school. It is possible that another generation, reared in the

stimulating atmosphere of this, may give us some rare flower of genius, if its mental force be not weakened by the general pouring-in process, or dissipated in the modern tendency toward limitless expansion and dilution. But club life in itself is not directly favorable to creative genius. The qualities of the imagination never flourish in crowds, though a certain order of talent does flourish there —a talent that brings quicker returns and more immediate consideration, at far less cost. The salon made brilliant and versatile women who were noted for conversation and diplomacy; it made charming women who ruled men and affairs through rare gifts of administration, tempered with intelligent sympathy and tact; it made executive women, and finely critical women, and masterful women, who left a strong and lasting impression upon the national life: but, though they lived in the main intellectual current of their time, stimulated and inspired its leaders, and had much to do with its direction, they seldom made a serious effort in literature themselves. The few who have left a name in letters only illustrate the fact that individual genius is a flower of another growth. Mme. de Staël would have been a great woman under any conditions; but we owe all of her best work in literature to her exile from the social life of Paris, where her thoughts had no time to crystallize. The gift of Mme. de Sévigné was nearly allied to a conversa-

tional one, but her mind was matured and deepened during years of seclusion under the lonely skies of Brittany. Mme. de la Fayette left the world of the salons early, to find her literary inspiration in the solitude of ill health and the stimulating friendship of La Rochefoucauld. Mme. du Châtelet, whose talent was of another color, wrote on philosophy and translated Newton, not in the breezy air of the salons, but in the tranquil shades of Cirey and the less tranquil society of Voltaire. There were other women who wrote, though they usually chose to hide a light which was not a very brilliant one, and to shine in other ways. It may be that it was the salon which made these women possible, as it created an intellectual atmosphere in which thought blossomed into intense and vivid life; but its direct tendency was to foster in women talents of a quite different sort from creative ones. It developed to a high degree, however, the fine discrimination and critical sense which led Rousseau to say that "a point of morals would not be better discussed in a society of philosophers than in that of a pretty woman of Paris."

The clubs have hardly lived long enough to justify a final judgment as to their outcome; but the best writers of our own time have not been, as a rule, actively identified with them, though a few, whose minds were already formed in another school, have had much to do in founding and leading them.

The many able women who have given their time and talents to the clubs have oftener merged their literary gifts, if they had them, into work of another sort, not less valuable in its way, but less tangible and less individual. It is the work of the general, who plans, organizes, sifts values, adapts means to definite ends, but who lives too much in the swift current of affairs to give heed to the voice of the imagination, or to master the art of literary form which alone makes for thought a permanent abiding-place.

But if the clubs do not produce great creative writers,—who, after all, are born, not made,—they furnish a multitude of ready ones, and an army of readers who are likely to have a dominant voice in the taste of the next generation. The result is certain to be—indeed, is already—a voluminous literature. The quantity of a thing, however, does not insure its fine quality; oftener the reverse. Naturally, the question of standards becomes one of grave importance, unless we are ready to accept the rule of the average, which more than offsets the rise of the lowest by the fall of the highest, with an ultimate tendency downward. We grow in the direction of our ideals, and these are measured by the height of our standards. That many of the clubs have exalted ideals, and are doing a great deal of valuable work, is not a matter of doubt. It is equally certain that some of them work with a zeal

that is not according to knowledge, through lack of capable leaders, and through a fallacy, nowhere so fatal as in art and letters, that the wish to do a thing is equivalent to a talent for doing it.

There is no doubt that American women read and discuss books enough. It may be that we read too many. One may devour books as one does bonbons, and with little more profit. Nor is there any doubt that we write papers enough and hear talks enough on every imaginable subject, from the antediluvians to Imperialism and the Chinese question. To whatever all this mental activity may lead, it does not always lead to culture, even of the mind, and I take the word, unqualified, to include much more. It does lead to a broad diffusion of intelligence, but there is an essential difference between intelligence and culture. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is quite possible, in running after the one, to run away from the other. The woman who belongs to ten or twelve clubs in order to be of the new age, and to learn enough of all sorts of things to be able to talk about them, may find her social compensation and a harmless way of amusing herself, if she likes that sort of amusement; but if she aims at mental culture, that is another affair. It is not a matter of facts and phrases and formulas that one goes in search of, but an inward growth, the result of long and loving companionship with the best thought of the world, which is not at all the

same thing as a flitting acquaintance with a multitude of subjects, or the ability to talk glib platitudes about the latest fads in art or science or literature. Such companionship is found to only a limited extent in gatherings of any sort; but stimulus and inspiration may be found there, and here lies the true intellectual value of the club. To thoughtful and sincere women, who have a certain amount of training and natural gifts of assimilation, with small facilities for contact with the thinking world, it is a priceless boon. But to narrow and untrained intellects that like to flit from one thing to another, content with a flying glimpse and a telling point or two which will go far toward making them seem wise to the uninitiated, there are large possibilities in the way of what we may call imitation culture. It is simply another outlet for the ambition of the parvenu who puts on costly clothes and rare jewels in the comfortable assurance that " fine feathers make fine birds."

V

IT will, I think, be conceded that the special distinction of the American woman does not lie in her intellect or her learning. Brilliant gifts and attainments, to a certain point, may indeed be exceptionally frequent; but they have often been equaled, if not exceeded, in the past. It lies, rather, in her facility for utilizing knowledge and adapting it to

visible ends. To a combination of many talents has been added one to make them all available. It is essentially a talent for "arriving," in other words, a talent for success, either with or without intellectual ability of a high order, and consists largely in a keen insight as to serviceable values, with a marked aptness for catching salient points and using them to the best advantage. It is a variation of the same talent that has made our country the wonder of the century. In men we call it business sagacity, but it may find an outlet in many other channels besides the amassing of fortunes. In women we call it cleverness, and its shades are endless. It makes the success of the philanthropist, the leader, and the administrator of the household, as well as the fortune of the social aspirant, and sometimes of the charlatan. In itself it has no ethical quality. It is simply an instrument, and its value depends upon the end for which it is used. But the result of it is that no women in the world have so much versatility, or make a little knowledge go so far.

On the social side this talent is invaluable, and it is one of the most piquant charms of the American woman, when the sharp corners of provincialism are rubbed off. On the intellectual side, however, though it gives an adaptable quality to genuine scholarship, it drifts easily into superficiality and affectation. I do not mean to say that the club is responsible for the fact that a hundred charla-

tans follow in the wake of every real talent, as a hundred Tartufes in the wake of every saint—when saints are in fashion; but it *is* responsible when it takes a bit of colored glass for a gem. It is sure, also, to suffer from the pretension of those who illy represent it. The salon, which made things of the intellect a fashion, received its worst blow in the house of its friends. Madelon, in "Les Précieuses Ridicules," looked upon life as a failure if she chanced to miss the last romance, or portrait, or madrigal, or sonnet; and Cathos declared that she should die of shame if any one asked her about something new which she had not seen. The pen of Molière sketched the crude copy of a fine thing in colors too vivid to be mistaken, and henceforth the copy stood for the thing. The world had its undiscriminating laugh at the salons; good taste blushed at the company in which it found itself; and the interests of intelligent women were put back for a generation. It was not the first time that a good cause has suffered from its too zealous followers, nor is it likely to be the last. The world moves in circles, even if there be a spiral tendency upward, as the optimists amiably assure us.

Doubtless we fancy ourselves much wiser than those seventeenth-century précieuses whose imitators did them so much harm. Certainly we put more seriousness into our pretensions. But we have our own little faults and affectations, though

they are not precisely the same. We do not devote ourselves to portraits, or sonnets, or madrigals. We do not moralize in maxims, good or bad, nor do we pretend to be sentimental; indeed, we pretend not to be, if we are. Sentiment is out of fashion. The modern Philaminte may look with chilling pity upon her belated sister who has the courage to like Tennyson and Mrs. Browning, when she ought to prefer Ibsen and the symbolists; but she is not likely to faint at a common word, or dismiss her cook for a solecism. Our foibles are of quite another sort. Instead of painting little pictures on a small canvas, we take a very large canvas and pad our pictures to fit it. We do not map out the passions on a *carte du tendre*, or give our valuable time to the discussion of a high-flown Platonism which cradles a woman in rose-leaves, while her lover waits for her a dozen years or so because it is vulgar to marry; but we map out the fields of the intellect, extending from protoplasm to the fixed stars, and undertake to traverse the whole as confidently as we start for a morning walk. If we cannot get over the ground fast enough, we can take an electric train and catch flying glimpses sufficient to give us a pleasant consciousness of being intelligent and quite modern.

Such vast aims are, no doubt, praiseworthy, and reflect great credit on the clubs which have demonstrated so clearly the expansive quality of the

feminine mind; but they are also fatiguing, and suggest the possibility that these same clubs are pushing us a little too fast and too far. One is often forced to the conclusion that we should do more if we did not try to do quite so much. It is very well to follow Emerson's advice to "hitch your wagon to a star"; but he never proposed hitching it to all the constellations at once. When I hear the Greek poets, the Italian painters, the English novelists, and the German masters disposed of at a symposium in a single afternoon, as I did not long ago, I wonder if the rare quality of mental distinction which made the glory of the Immortals will exist at all in the future; whether we shall not build tents for our thoughts instead of temples; whether, indeed, the finest flavor of thought will not be as hopelessly lost as the perfume of the flowers that are scattered in indiscriminate heaps along the highways to show their quantity.

Nor is there less danger in attempting too large things than too many things. It is certainly courageous for a woman who knows little of history, less of philosophy, and nothing at all about the art of writing, to undertake the Herculean task of preparing a paper on "The Pagan Philosophers and their Schools." With the best efforts, she will have only a few outlines of facts and second-hand opinions, which might have a certain value if either she or her audience proposed to fill them out. But

this is precisely what the modern woman who wishes to know a little of everything has no time to do, even if she have the inclination. There is to be a similar outline of Greek literature the next week, one of the middle ages the week after, and so on to the end of the season, when she has a fine collection of skeletons, with no flesh and blood on any of them, if, indeed, the skeletons themselves have not vanished into thin air. The Forty Immortals would shrink with dismay from the magnitude of such a scheme. The worst of it is that one comes to have a false sense of perspective, and to judge works of the intellect by their size instead of their quality—like the pretentious but ignorant woman who gravely remarked, after hearing a brilliant talk from a brilliant man on Irish wit, that she " did not find it very improving." There is, too, the natural result of calling things by the wrong names, and mistaking the thinnest of veneering for culture.

It is by no means necessary, or even desirable, that every woman belonging to a club should be a savante; indeed, considering the number of the clubs, I am not sure that this would not bring about a more deplorable state of affairs than if there were none at all. It may even be better for the average woman to know a little about many things than all about one thing, if she has a certain discrimination as to values, and the fine sense of pro-

portion which is the result of more or less mental training. But it *is* desirable that each one should have at least a little knowledge of what she undertakes to write or talk about. Why a woman who might have something to say concerning certain phases of our colonial life should be asked to write a paper on Greek art, of which she has not even read, much less thought, or one who is more or less familiar with various pleasant corners of English literature should be called upon to entertain her hearers on the Italian Renaissance, of which she knows nothing whatever, is one of the mysteries of the new era. "I am so glad to see you," said one woman to a friend whom she met on the street. "I have a paper to write on the symbolists. You know all about such things. What are the symbolists, anyway?" We are told that when the blind lead the blind, both are likely to come to grief. It is needless to say that these faults are not universal, as there is a great deal of careful study and fine thought in the clubs, but they are sufficiently common to be noted among things to be avoided.

A still more serious danger lies in the endless multiplication of clubs, which offers an irresistible temptation to those who like to cull a little here, and a little there, without too exacting effort in any direction. They may all be valuable in themselves, but because it is good to belong to one or

two active clubs of different aims, it does not follow that it is good to belong to a dozen; and I know of a woman who claims with pride that she belongs to twenty-two! "Moderation is the charm of life," said Jean Paul, and one sees with regret how little of that sort of charm there is left; indeed, I am not sure that it has not ceased to be considered a charm. We may find a note of warning in the later days of the great salons. The social life of the eighteenth century reads like a page of our own, with its whirl of *conversazioni*, its talks on science, its experiments in chemistry, physiology, psychology, its mania for discussing literature, art, and philosophy. The literary salons had blossomed into great centers of intellectual brilliancy, of which all this life was the natural pendant. It was the fashion then, as now, for women to concern themselves with affairs of state; to talk of the rights of man, though they had less to say than we have about the rights of woman; to dream of a social millennium, which they were doomed to wade through rivers of blood without reaching. They too invaded the secrets of the laboratory, and even the surgeon's domain. We hear of a young countess who carried a skeleton in her trunk when she went on a journey, "as one might carry a book to read," in order to study anatomy. These women, like ourselves, aimed to know a little of everything. They too were fired with the passion

for intelligence and the passion for multitudes. With the craving for novelties came the ever-growing need of a stronger spice to make them palatable. In this carnival of the mind they lost their faith and simplicity, loved with their brains instead of their hearts, forgot their natural duties, and found natural ties irksome. Longing for rest without the power to rest, they suffered from maladies of the nerves, and were devoured with the ennui of exhaustion. Life lost its equilibrium, and the result was inevitable. The reaction from the restlessness of an intellect that is not fed from inner sources, but finds its stimulus and theater alike in the world, was toward an exaggeration of the sensibilities. "If I could become calm, I should believe myself on a wheel," said one whose brilliancy had dazzled a generation. This fatal "too much" was not the least of the causes that lost to women the empire they had won. All movements are measured, in the end, by a standard of common sense, and reactions are in proportion to the deviation from a just mean. The revolution which brought liberty to men, or at least shifted the burdens to some one else, deprived women of what they had. They were forbidden to organize, and sent back to the fireside and cradles. The republic swept away from them the last vestige of political power, and gave them nothing in the place of their lost social kingdom. They were forced to

speak with hushed voices in hidden coteries. Of these there were always a few, but their prestige was gone. "There is one thing which is not French," said Napoleon; "it is that a woman can do as she pleases." And he proceeded straightway to give point to his theory by exiling the ablest woman in France and silencing all the rest.

We are apt to take high moral ground on the frivolity of these women, and to pride ourselves on our superiority because we have such a serious way of amusing ourselves—so serious, indeed, that we forget there can be anything so questionable as frivolity about it. To be sure, the clubs are free from many of the faults of the salons. They do not put social conventions in the place of principles, nor substitute an esthetic conscience for an ethical one; nor do they drift at all in the direction of moral laxity. A movement of the intellect, too, which has its roots in the character is more likely to last than one that hangs on the suffrage of those it was meant to please and glorify. But we have the same mental unrest, the same thirst for excitement, the same feverish activity, the same indisposition to stay at home with our thoughts. A fever of the intellect may be preferable to a fever of the senses, and less harmful as an epidemic, but it tends equally toward exhaustion and disintegration. It is not so much a question of morals as a question of balance. The modern fashion, however, of doing

everything, even to thinking, in masses, is not altogether due to a fever of the intellect, any more than it was a hundred years ago. Much of it is doubtless due to a genuine love of knowledge, much of it to a haunting desire to be doing something in the outside world, though the thing done be possibly not at all worth the doing; but a great deal of it is due to a sort of hyperæsthesia of the social sentiment, or the mental restlessness that betrays a lack of poise and depth in the character. We call it the spirit of the age—the innocent phantom which has to bear the burden of most of our sins, and is gathering so resistless a force that the strongest and wisest are swept along, despite themselves, in its accelerating course. But the spirit of the age is only the sum of individual forces. It needs only a sufficient number of wise counter-forces to temper and modify it.

VI

A WORD as to another phase of the club. We have seen that the salons broke through the exclusive lines of rank, and created a society based largely upon standards of the intellect, with a meeting-point of good manners. The woman's club has done a similar work toward preventing the crystallization of American society on the basis of wealth. Its standards are professedly of the mind, though they are flexible enough to include a wide range of

ability, aspiration, and small distinctions of various sorts. It would be too much to say that these elements are fused into anything like a homogeneous society; but they have a recognized point of contact that suffices for literary or charitable aims, though not altogether for social ones, which demand the larger contact of personal sympathies, and a certain community of language that comes within the province of manners. The salons, however, were wise enough to establish and maintain the social equilibrium between men and women, while the clubs seem to be rapidly destroying it. Outside of a limited dinner-giving, amusement-loving circle, it is undeniable that our social life is centering largely in clubs composed exclusively of women, whose tastes are diverging more and more from those of men, and in the functions growing out of them. To these we may add a few receptions with a sprinkling of men, and an endless procession of teas and luncheons with no men at all. Private entertaining of a general character, with its varying flavor of individuality, seems likely, with many other pleasant things, to become a memory. If these clubs grew out of a state of affairs in which women were virtually excluded from the intellectual life of men, we are fast drifting toward the reverse condition, in which men will have no part in the intellectual and very little in the social life of women.

Whether this marked separation of interests be-

yond a reasonable point be for the good of either men or women, is a matter of grave doubt. It is certain that women who are brought into frequent contact with the minds of men think more clearly and definitely, look at things in a larger way, and do a finer quality of intellectual work, than those who have been limited mainly to the companionship of their own sex. Societies of women are apt to fail in breadth through too much attention to technicalities out of season, to sacrifice the greater good to personal prejudices, to emphasize a little brief authority, to grow hard rather than strong, to become carping and critical without the clearness of vision that gives a rational basis for criticism. Nor does the fact that a great many women are superior to these limitations, and that men are not invariably free from them, affect the general drift of things. On the other side, it is equally true that men have done the greatest work under the influence of able women, from the days of Pericles and the great Greeks who found a fresh inspiration in the salon of Aspasia, to the brilliant men of modern times, too numerous to cite here, who have not failed to acknowledge their debt to feminine judgment and criticism. Men, too, are naturally averse to the trammels of form, and, left to themselves, rapidly lose the refinement and courtesy that came in with the social reign of women. While the best of each is drawn out

through social contact on the plane of the intellect, the worst is accented by separation.

Then, aside from the fact that a large part of the happiness of the world depends upon a certain degree of harmony in the tastes of men and women, which is not likely to exist if they have utterly divergent points of social interest, men are an incontestable factor in all our plans for bettering matters, themselves included. We cannot fairly claim to constitute more than half of the human family, and, if we do not make some social compromise, we may share the fate of the Princess Ida, and see all of our fine schemes melt away like the fabric of a dream. We are not yet ready to establish an order of intellectual vestals, though drifting in that direction; and, since the women's clubs do really constitute a distinct social life, why not make them more effective on that side? Why leave all these possibilities of power in the hands of those who make a business of amusing themselves? It is a fashion to rail at society as frivolous; but it is precisely what we make it, and it is ruled by women. If it tends to grow vapid, and luxurious, and commercial, and artificial, we have only to plan something as attractive on a finer and more natural basis. And where do we find a better starting-point than in connection with the women's clubs? To be sure, men do not, as a rule, find them interesting; indeed, they vote them a trifle dull, but

that may be because they have no vital part in them. Then, the fault may lie a little in the women themselves. There is clearly a flaw somewhere in our methods or our ideals. In trying to avoid the frivolities of society, we may fall into the equally fatal error of failing to make better things attractive, and so permit the busy men of to-day to slip away altogether from the influence of what many are pleased to call our finer moral and esthetic sense—to say nothing of what we lose ourselves. It may be deplorable, but it is still a fact, that truth is doubly captivating when served with the piquant sauces that make even error dangerously fascinating. We have to deal with people as they are, not as we think they ought to be.

I am not disposed to quote the Frenchwomen of a century or so ago as models. But there are many points we might take from them in the art of making a social life on intellectual lines agreeable, as well as a vital force. When women who are neither young nor beautiful dominate an age of brilliant men through intellect and tact, it does no harm to study their methods a little in an age when women of equal talent, superior education, and finer moral aims succeed to only a limited extent in doing more than stimulate one another—a good thing to do, but not final. Those women, too, had old distinctions to reconcile, and a powerful court for a rival. They had one advantage, as they made a

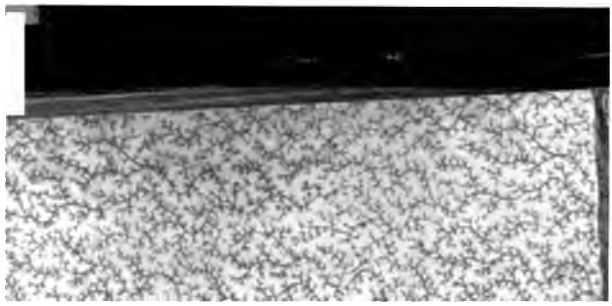
cult of esprit, which is a gift of their race, while we make a cult of knowledge, which may be more substantial, but is less luminous, and not so available socially. Besides, knowledge is a thing to be acquired and not caviar to mediocrity, which is apt to use it crudely, and with pretension. "Let your studies flow into your manners, and your readings show themselves in your virtues," said Mme. de Lambert. I am sorry to say that the typical Frenchwoman of a hundred years ago did not always take so exalted a view of her duties; but even as a matter of taste she had too delicate a sense of proportion to merge the woman in the intellect. She scattered about her the flavor of knowledge rather than the knowledge itself; which is not so easy, as one does not have the real flavor of knowledge without the essence of it, and something more. Rare natural gifts have a distinction of their own, but in ordinary life what one *is* counts for more than what one *knows*, and the secret of attraction lies rather in the sum of the qualities which we call character than in the acquirements. A woman may be familiar with Sanskrit, and calculate the distance of the fixed stars, without being interesting, or even admirable, as a woman. The main point is to preserve one's symmetry, and one's center of gravity; then, the more knowledge the better. It may be that the flaw in our ideals lies just here, and that in the too exclusive pursuit of certain

things fine in themselves, we neglect other things equally if not more vital.

No doubt the Frenchwoman did much that she ought not to have done, and left undone much that she ought to have done, just as we do, though the things were not precisely the same; we know, too, that the time came when she did lose her poise, and with it her power. But, with all her faults, in the days of her glory she never forgot her point of view. She was rarely aggressive, and, without being too conscious of herself or her aims, it was a part of her esthetic creed to call out the best in others. With consummate tact, she crowned her serious gifts with the gracious ways and gentle amenities that disarmed antagonism and diffused everywhere a breath of sweetness. She carried with her, too, the sunshine that springs from an inexhaustible gaiety of heart, and this was one source of her unfailing charm. Perhaps it was partly why the literary salon retained its prestige for nearly two hundred years, and, in spite of its errors, was brilliant and amusing, as well as an intellectual force, to the end.

It is far from my intention to repeat the old cry that other days were better days, and other ways better ways, than ours. We have a life of our own, and do not wish to copy one that is dead, or to put on manners that do not fit us. But the essentials of human nature are eternally the same, and in

bringing new forces to bear upon it we may do well sometimes to consult the wisdom of the past, to ponder the secret of its failures as of its successes. It is not a matter of depreciating our aims or our ways, but of getting the most out of them, perhaps through some subtle touch that we have missed; also of preserving our sanity and equilibrium in this new order of things, which tends always to grow more complex and more bewildering.



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